

# INTERDISCIPLINARY POSSIBILITIES IN UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH

An abstract of a Dissertation by  
Robert W. Thomas  
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Drake University  
Advisor: John Hagaman

In the past two decades there has been a massive proliferation of college English courses. The addition of more three hour courses has tended to compartmentalize and isolate knowledge. There are many justifications for developing English curriculum in the context of an interdisciplinary humanities program. Interdisciplinarity implies a student-centered curriculum. Furthermore, it demands a broader variety of teaching techniques. Interdisciplinary experiments have generated excitement among faculty and students who have been involved in programs. The time is here when English departments can profit by developing interdisciplinary programs.

Interdisciplinary humanities programs which have wide appeal, measured success and unique characteristics which could be replicated or could serve as model programs for English departments are discussed and analyzed. The programs discussed in Chapter II were selected from a wide geographic range and from widely diverse kinds of colleges and universities. In Chapter III there is a focus upon five interdisciplinary humanities programs in Iowa institutions, which the writer visited. Interviews were held with persons knowledgeable about the programs. The results of a survey of administrators, English chairpersons, and college English majors concerning their attitudes about college English and interdisciplinarity are included and analyzed in Chapter III.

Interdisciplinary humanities programs lead to better faculty-student cooperation. Teachers demonstrate enthusiasm for interdisciplinary teaching, and they have opportunities to work with colleagues from different disciplines in a productive atmosphere. Students in interdisciplinary programs are more involved and have more opportunities to develop their creative potential.

The characteristics of an exemplary program are developed and may be used to create an undergraduate English course or to evaluate an existing course. The exemplary program stresses that curriculum should be planned from a broad concept. Further, it should rely upon more than a single medium of expression. The choice of material should

elicit self-expression. Students should help plan the program. The program stresses faculty cooperation and advocates cross-listing of courses. The techniques which are most applicable to teaching an interdisciplinary humanities course are inquiry and the application of a humanistic method. An ideal humanities course should place priorities upon teaching values.

INTERDISCIPLINARY POSSIBILITIES IN  
UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
The School of Graduate Studies  
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Doctor of Arts

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by  
Robert W. Thomas

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by

Robert W. Thomas

Approved by Committee:

John A. Hagaman  
Chairperson

John E. [unclear]

Marion Perret

Paul Blahly

David E. Foster

Earle L. Canfield  
Dean of the School of Graduate Studies



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## CHAPTER I

### A HUMANITIES APPROACH IN UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH

Ever since the seventeenth century, science has been concerned primarily with atomistic descriptions of substances and phenomena. Its philosophical heroes have been Democritus (fifth century B.C.) and Rene Descartes (1596-1650), both of whom taught that the way to knowledge is to separate substances and events into their ultimate components and reactions. The most pressing problems of humanity, however, involve relationships, communications, changes of trends--in other words, situations in which systems must be studied as a whole in all the complexity of their interactions.<sup>1</sup>

In many ways the humanities, too, have been concerned with atomizing the humanistic disciplines and separating them into narrow specialized components; furthermore, they frequently rely more upon scientific principles of inquiry than upon humanistic principles. Technology, with its heavy reliance upon specialization, is responsible for much of the problem. Howard Mumford Jones in "The Humanities and the Common Reader" pleads for "intellectual humility" among scholars as an antidote to the growing "technological vocabulary" which has become central to literary criticism

<sup>1</sup>René Dubos, So Human an Animal (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), p. 27.

as well as to science.<sup>2</sup>

The primary goal of this paper is to identify characteristics of an interdisciplinary humanities approach which college English teachers and departments may use as a guide to develop courses. The first chapter will discuss the nature of the humanities and will explain how the humanities fit within an interdisciplinary framework. Chapter II will concentrate upon designs and structures of programs from a variety of American institutions. Chapter III will focus upon five individual interdisciplinary humanities courses in Iowa colleges in search for admirable characteristics. Also, Chapter III will reflect the results of a survey of college administrators (reflected by academic deans), English departments (reflected by English chairpersons), and students (reflected by selected English majors) concerning attitudes which are central to designing English curriculum. The paper will conclude with a listing of those characteristics which are most crucial in the development of an interdisciplinary humanities program.

This paper focuses upon possibilities in undergraduate English. Dissertations concerned with interdisciplinary humanities tend to cover a broader range of possibilities. Notable dissertations include Humanities Programs and

<sup>2</sup>Howard Mumford Jones, "The Humanities and the Common Reader," in The Humanities: An Appraisal, ed. Julian Harris (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1950), pp. 23-31.

Courses, 1968-1972 by Janet Ebert (1973).<sup>3</sup> Ebert's study ranges from junior high school through college with a primary focus upon music. Her study is national in scope. Edward Kelly's dissertation The Preparation of Humanities Teachers: A Status Study (1973) argues the need for colleges and universities to develop interdisciplinary programs to educate teachers for high school programs.<sup>4</sup> The focus in this paper, A Humanities Approach in Undergraduate English, tends to be upon the first two years in college English programs. The paper arrives at conclusions which may serve as guideposts for English teachers or English departments which may wish to consider developing interdisciplinary humanities courses.

#### Definitions

The emerging definitions of humanities offer possibilities for colleges to move away from the specialized, non-related disciplines which have characterized them in the twentieth century. Frederick Ritsch in "Humanities Teaching and the Future School: A Traditionalist View" offers a definition which focuses upon the balanced importance of past, present, and future:

<sup>3</sup> Janet Ebert, Humanities Programs and Courses, 1968-1972, Diss. The Ohio State University 1973.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Michael Kelly, The Preparation of Humanities Teachers: A Status Study, Diss. Boston University 1973.



The Humanities are directed toward sustaining human communication and improving the quality of that communication. This human communication takes place within history at both horizontal and vertical levels: the Humanities maintain the communication between humans through time, and in our time.

The Humanities are that focus of human concern which is devoted to improving the quality of communication between you, the person next to you, and the person you can become in a future determined by your choice.<sup>5</sup>

Any precise definition of the humanities is difficult. Howard Mumford Jones tests the hypothesis that the humanities "are what you have left in the college curriculum when you extract the sciences--natural, physical and social."<sup>6</sup> He finds the hypothesis wanting in that the sciences may develop a "humane mode of education."<sup>7</sup> The initial definition given to the humanities a decade ago along with Congressional amendments of 1968 and 1970 for the National Endowment of the Humanities says:

The term "humanities" includes, but is not limited to, the study of the following: language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism, theory and

<sup>5</sup>Frederick F. Ritsch, "Humanities Teaching and the Future School: A Traditionalist View," Liberal Education, 60 (1974), 429.

<sup>6</sup>Jones, p. 22.

<sup>7</sup>Jones, p. 22.

practice of the arts; those aspects of the social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods; and the study and application of the humanities to the human environment with particular attention to the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of natural life.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, the Humanities Endowment was instituted to be a counter balance to the National Science Foundation founded in 1950. What most clearly distinguishes the humanities within the Congressional definition are the specific disciplines named and the implementation of "humanistic methods."

How do humanistic methods differ from scientific methods? In "Humanism as a Method," in the Education Forum, James Noll delineates the differences:

<u>Scientific Method</u>	<u>Humanistic Method</u>
Responds to objective problems	Responds to subjective problems
Uses externals	Uses internals
Is universally verifiable	Is individually verifiable
Analyzes particulars in an exclusive, prescriptive manner	Analyzes particulars in a far less exclusive or prescriptive manner
Emphasizes objective experience	Emphasizes personal experience
Attempts to build generalizations	Concentrates on single phenomena rather than speculating on the universal

<sup>8</sup> National Endowment for the Humanities, Tenth Annual Report (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1976), p. 7.

Relies on accumulated and refined knowledge	Holds possibilities for cumulative effects, but not necessary to the fulfillment of the method
Attempts to control and limit valuational aspects in inquiry	Gives free rein to valu- ational aspects
Generally imposes con- formity to fact	Promotes explorations beyond fact <sup>9</sup>

The precise scientific method is a sharp contrast to the more subjective humanistic method. Clearly the qualitative attitudes in the humanistic method are similar to the attitudes of William Arrowsmith, Albert Levi, and Howard M. Jones.

Sterility in college English classes may be the result of a class which is too oriented toward the scientific method. Writing assignments which disallow that which is "internal" or "individually verifiable" tend to deny the human qualities of the writers. The great potential in literature classes, too, may be negated by an approach which relies too much upon scientific methods. The humanistic method with its emphasis upon "internals" and "personal experience" is more applicable to experiences in both the study of literature and composition. Nathan Pusey feels that the humanities should emphasize the greatness of people not by "the scientific exploration of things," but rather by

<sup>9</sup>James Noll, "Humanism as a Method," Education Forum, 28 (1964), 494.

emphasizing a humanistic approach.<sup>10</sup> The danger of a "servile imitation" of the scientific method has, according to William Arrowsmith, made humanists "merely technicians of dead and living languages."<sup>11</sup>

There are two diametrically opposed views of the humanities today: one traditional, one modern. The traditional view of the humanities tends to focus upon the academic disciplines, while the modern view tends to focus upon the humanizing and unifying effects of the disciplines. The following comparison offers a guide to the most significant differences which are frequently noted between the traditional and modern views concerning the humanities:

<u>Traditional View</u>	<u>Modern View</u>
1. A focus upon subject matter which is frequently restricted by form (the novel), time, and nationality	1. A focus upon theme, questions, or problems. Subject matter cuts across form, time, and nationality
2. Focus upon a single discipline	2. Tends to be interdisciplinary
3. Tends to be past oriented	3. Tends to be past, present, or future oriented

Some programs, however, combine both the traditional

<sup>10</sup> Nathan M. Pusey, "The Centrality of Humanistic Study," in The Humanities: An Appraisal, pp. 80-81.

<sup>11</sup> William Arrowsmith, "The Shame of the Graduate Schools," Harpers, March, 1966, p. 52.

and modern views to achieve an interdisciplinary approach. Grinnell College offers humanities courses (described in Chapter III) which follow points one and two of the modern view but deal almost entirely with pre-twentieth century materials. The point here is that while many recently developed interdisciplinary programs follow the modern view, there is no reason to assume a program must be a singular reflection of the twentieth century.

The primary thrust of the contemporary attitudes about the implementation of the humanities into college curriculums can be seen in three major NEH projects. In 1975 the University of Florida was awarded a grant to develop a program which was designed to "bridge the gap between the now-isolated professional schools and the required liberal arts in the humanities."<sup>12</sup> The NEH grant encouraged the development of core courses which include such studies as history and literature to tie in with the professional fields of "health care, law, business, and engineering."<sup>13</sup> With the theme "The Humanities and the National Life," the National Institute (which began at Yale in 1974), selected fellows from "literature, history, American studies, political science, anthropology and art history" to pool "their intellectual resources" to "understand better such issues

<sup>12</sup>Tenth Annual Report, p. 39.

<sup>13</sup>Tenth Annual Report, p. 39.

basic to American studies as the effect of cultural pluralism on the American character and the connection among American literature, art, and the culture in which they are produced."<sup>14</sup> A third institute is focusing upon "Technology and the Humanities" at the University of Chicago. The fellows at this institute, according to the mission, will

explore together the relationship between human beings and the machine, and the cultural changes technology has wrought. Topics such as mass communications, the arts and technology, advertising, and bureaucracy will serve as vehicles for working out various interdisciplinary approaches to undergraduate education.<sup>15</sup>

All three institutes were designed to break down "artificial barriers among disciplines in order to approach a topic or problem in its entirety."<sup>16</sup> Central to all institutes was the contemporary view of approaching problems in an interdisciplinary mode.

The emerging interdisciplinary mode is in part a logical conclusion to the modern view of the humanities. Clark Kuebler sees "synthesis, a fusion of particulars a redefinition of man's true destiny and a rediscovery of his larger cultural heritage," working to overcome existing

<sup>14</sup>Tenth Annual Report, p. 40.

<sup>15</sup>Tenth Annual Report, p. 40.

<sup>16</sup>Tenth Annual Report, p. 39.

examples of specialization which have allowed literature to be "dissected and treated like a biological specimen."<sup>17</sup> There exists a growing attitude that the compartmentalization, created by departments and disciplines, is not wholly satisfactory. Judson Jerome advocates an alternative to the traditional department by suggesting "problem-oriented institutes in...race and poverty, communication...urban studies, arts and society and pollution."<sup>18</sup> Jerome's position may seem extreme in scope; yet, if considered in the light of major NEH projects, it appears less so.

College English departments can and should respond to the increasing possibilities of being a focal point in developing interdisciplinary programs within their institutions. There has been, as William Levi notes, an "enormous proliferation of its [the humanities] component disciplines." English departments should evaluate their positions in the light of what Levi calls the "steady encroachment upon the area of value concern" by the social and natural sciences and the fine arts.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Clark G. Kuebler, "The Special Significance of the Humanities in Liberal Education," in The Humanities: An Appraisal, p. 86.

<sup>18</sup>Judson Jerome, "Toward an Ideal College," in Humanistic Frontiers in American Education, ed. Roy P. Fairfield (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1971), p. 213.

<sup>19</sup>Albert William Levi, The Humanities Today (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), p. 25.

The word interdisciplinary is often regarded with derision. The word is somewhat ambiguous, and, of course, it is a hybrid, which by its own magnitude seems to offer great expectations. Joan Baum points to a problem in which "interdisciplinary courses seem to be no more than loose juxtaposition, the laying side by side of related subject matter for separate but equal opportunity in the classroom."<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, there looms in the minds of some a notion that a discipline could be subsumed by larger themes or elements.<sup>21</sup> While the possibility exists that a discipline could lose its essential identity through interdisciplinarity, the likelihood seems less for any discipline that has been able to stand alone for a substantial time, such as literature or composition.

Guy Michaud's following definitions of cognate terms create a number of distinctions which have been widely accepted and which make clear differences in meaning:

Discipline . . . . . A specific body of teach-  
able knowledge with its  
own background of educa-  
tion, training, procedures,  
methods and content areas.

<sup>20</sup> Joan Baum, "Interdisciplinary Studies, the Latest Experimental Rage in the Classroom," College Composition and Communication, 26 (1975), 30-33.

<sup>21</sup> Raymond Cowell, The Critical Enterprise: English Studies in Higher Education (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1975), p. 65.



Multidisciplinary . . . Juxtaposition of various disciplines, sometimes with no apparent connection between them. e.g.: music + mathematics + history.

Pluridisciplinary . . . Juxtaposition of disciplines assumed to be more or less related, e.g.: mathematics + physics, or French + Latin + Greek: "classical humanities" in France.

Interdisciplinary . . . An adjective describing the interaction among two or more different disciplines. This interaction may range from simple communication of ideas to the mutual integration of organizing concepts, methodology, procedures, epistemology, terminology, data, and organization of research and education in a fairly large field. An interdisciplinary group consists of persons trained in different fields of knowledge (disciplines) with different concepts, methods, and data and terms organized into a common effort on a common problem with continuous intercommunication among the participants from the different disciplines.

Transdisciplinary . . . Establishing a common system of axioms for a set of disciplines (e.g. anthropology considered as "the science of man and his accomplishments," according to Linton's definition).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Interdisciplinarity: Problems of Teaching and Research in Universities, Proc. of a Seminar on Interdisciplinarity, 7-12 Sept. 1970 (Nice: University of Nice [France], 1970).

Michaud's definition seemingly points to a "team" concept for interdisciplinary teaching. Michaud's definition, however, is broad enough to include classes taught by one teacher. An interdisciplinary course corporately developed by teachers from different disciplines could be taught by one teacher. The corporate planning by teachers from various disciplines could help to achieve integration which Michaud sees as essential. The "Introduction to Liberal Arts" program at Coe College in Iowa, which will be discussed in Chapter III, offers an example of how an institution may achieve interdisciplinarity without team teaching.

#### Arguments for Interdisciplinary Approaches

The arguments for colleges and universities to consider interdisciplinary approaches range from a desire to experiment to a strong conviction that the very survival of mankind depends upon interdisciplinary understandings. Les Humphreys echoes the call of many when he says that the "anomalies of discipline oriented educational practices are of such magnitude for our post-industrial world... that interdisciplinarity...should be tried."<sup>23</sup>

And, of course, interdisciplinarity has been flourishing in higher education in varying degrees for years. As a case in point, American Studies once thought of as

<sup>23</sup>Les Humphreys, Interdisciplinarity: A Selected Bibliography (ERIC ED 115 536), p. 12.

an interdisciplinary program in graduate colleges has made its way into undergraduate programs in both two and four year institutions. Institutions which have developed American Studies programs during the first two years include Pine Manor Junior College in Massachusetts, Orange Coast College in California, and Northwestern Michigan College in Michigan.<sup>24</sup>

American institutions, such as Texas University at Dallas, the University of Wisconsin at Green Bay, the University of California at Santa Cruz, and Ramapo College of New Jersey at Mahwah, New Jersey, are deeply committed to interdisciplinary undergraduate programs. The Ramapo experience will serve to illustrate a structure which moves away sharply from traditional lines. The traditional departmental approaches have been replaced by "seven 'schools,' each named to indicate its focus or theme: American Studies; Intercultural Studies; Contemporary Arts; Metropolitan and Community Studies; Environmental Studies; Social Relations; Theoretical and Applied Science."<sup>25</sup> With the wisdom and knowledge which has come from five years into the college-wide interdisciplinary experiment, Ramapo is moving forward. The major problems which departments and colleges

<sup>24</sup>Bruce A. Lohof, "American Studies Makes its Way into Junior College," Junior College Journal, 39, No. 6 (1969), 49.

<sup>25</sup>George T. Potter, The Promise of Interdisciplinarity and Its Problems (Mahwah: Ramapo College Press, 1977), p. 5.

should consider in interdisciplinary planning based upon the Ramapo experience include a realization that interdisciplinary programs take more time to plan and are, subsequently, more expensive than traditional programs. Since students frequently have no background for interdisciplinary courses, they tend to feel safer in the more narrow disciplines. Finally, interdisciplinary courses are difficult to monitor in terms of college objectives.<sup>26</sup> The problems at Ramapo are similar to problems at other institutions which have developed interdisciplinary programs.

Interdisciplinarity has superior potential for English classes and departments because it emphasizes "know how," and the adventure of discovery; furthermore, it suggests a lively atmosphere with student involvement.<sup>27</sup> These characteristics parallel the study of language, literature and composition; their integration into college English classrooms is essential.

A major problem of the twentieth century in higher education is course proliferation and its end products, fragmentation, and compartmentalization. The interrelation of knowledge and the sequence of ideas, as Jerome Bruner

<sup>26</sup>Potter, pp. 8-11.

<sup>27</sup>Interdisciplinarity, p. 56.

explains, should be the goal of education.<sup>28</sup> Yet, there exist many examples in American colleges and universities where course proliferation has created alarm. At Harvard, students must select ten courses to complete the general education requirement from 2,600 possibilities. A university committee investigating the possibilities of curriculum reform describes the confusion which faces students by reporting that "more students are bewildered than stimulated by this (2,600 courses) cornucopia."<sup>29</sup>

Harvard's council of arts and sciences has proposed a plan which establishes core areas in literature and the arts, history, social and philosophical analysis, science and mathematics, and foreign languages and culture. The core plan is an attempt to integrate knowledge and is essentially pluridisciplinary. One block of humanities courses, however, must be interdisciplinary. The "Harvard Report" states the aim of the courses is to

show the connection between the arts and literature, and between both and their social and historical context. Thus these courses will be interdisciplinary....<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Jerome S. Bruner, On Knowing: Essays for the Left Hand (New York: Atheneum, 1968), pp. 119-120.

<sup>29</sup>Susan Schiefelbein, "Confusion at Harvard: What Makes an Educated Man?" Saturday Review, 1 April 1978, p. 13.

<sup>30</sup>"The Harvard Report on the Core Curriculum," (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), as quoted in "Harvard Weighs Plan to Reform College Curriculum," The Chronicle of Higher Education, 6 March 1978, p. 17, col. 1.

One suggestion the "Report" makes for course development is close to the interdisciplinary course "The Good Society" at the University of Iowa which is described in Chapter III of this dissertation. The "Report" suggests that courses may

wish to focus on a specific theme in the history of ideas, such as country vs. city, ideals of education, the concepts of the happy man, utopias, the classical ideal, and study its literary and artistic manifestations.<sup>31</sup>

The Harvard curriculum reform is an encouraging sign. The interdisciplinary course possibilities the plan mandates are particularly encouraging.

Many writers express concern that introductory courses have become so narrow and segmented that they have little meaning for underclass students. Jarold Kieffer, in appealing for an interdisciplinary course which would cut across the social sciences and the humanities, says the overriding problem is two-fold:

First - Each discipline tends to present itself to the student in a nearly isolated way, as though it is a distinct, self-contained subject matter area. Indeed students now face seemingly airtight compartmentalization within individual disciplines.

Second - The learning process for freshmen has become unnecessarily complicated and frustrating because of the lack of an analytical framework

<sup>31</sup>"Harvard Weighs Plan to Reform College Curriculum," p. 17, col. 1.

that the students could use to help themselves organize and deal with the bewildering series of specialized curricular contents to which they are haphazardly exposed.<sup>32</sup>

Kieffer's course proposal suggests, as do many current proposals, that one course, which carries the weight of a longer time duration and more credit, has far greater possibilities of integrating material than do two courses representing two disciplines.

There is a growing concern and suspicion among college teachers and administrators that specialization within the fragmented disciplines is threatening the underpinnings of a liberal education. Rexford Tugwell laments the notion that persons from the English and economics faculties have few mutual interests, and are, furthermore, incapable of dealing with the language of the scientists.<sup>33</sup>

The intense specialization which has characterized graduate colleges has been increasing in undergraduate education. Robert P. DeSieno and Fredrick D. Horn, professors of chemistry and English at Westminster College in Pennsylvania, see the incursion of overspecialization in undergraduate

<sup>32</sup>Jarold Kieffer, "Wanted: A New Introductory Course for Social Science and the Humanities," Liberal Education, 61 (1975), 440-41.

<sup>33</sup>Rexford Tugwell, "A Connected View of Things," in Humanistic Education and Western Civilization: Essays for Robert M. Hutchins, ed. Arthur A. Cohen (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1964), p. 156.

education as difficult to overcome because of the "intellectual climate of a campus or the lack of financial resources to support interdisciplinary programs."<sup>34</sup> DeSieno and Horn believe that they have overcome specialization to some extent by understanding that the creative processes in their seemingly divergent fields are "frequently similar and sometimes identical."<sup>35</sup> The interdisciplinary science-literature course which was developed at Westminster was taught during the January portion of a 4-1-4 calendar. Typically the mid-winter session, or the 1 portion of the 4-1-4 calendar, is that portion of the academic year where experimentation in course development is encouraged.

#### Writing as an Interdisciplinary Study

All too frequently the only required course in college English is a course which uses literature as a model to teach composition. This model often develops as an adulterated version of literary criticism. John Fenstermaker presents an interesting argument that the traditional 101 English can function as such a course. Fenstermaker's rationale suggests the competency based imperative which many public persons are addicted to can be satisfied by the following pluridisciplinary approach:

<sup>34</sup>Robert P. DeSieno and Fredrick D. Horn, "Literature and Science for a January Term: Darwin and Evolution," Journal of College Science Teaching, 3 (1973), 61.

<sup>35</sup>DeSieno and Horn, p. 61.



Obviously, I believe that the literature-based writing course in freshman English is justified, in fact, especially justified in light of the background, interests, and abilities of today's freshmen. Such a course will stand the harsh scrutiny it is facing from those who wish us to be accountable in specifically practical terms. The literature-based composition course I have described, with its emphasis on the writing of exposition and argument using the rhetorical patterns studied earlier, its emphasis on getting students to think critically, to organize their ideas coherently, and to express themselves precisely and gracefully, does respond to the charge given us by the university--to teach the 'essential competencies'; and by asking the students to explore the moral and social implications of human actions they have participated in compellingly, albeit vicariously, through the medium of imaginative writing, the literature-based writing course places itself squarely in line with the major objective of the Liberal Studies curriculum, leading students to 'a free inquiry into humane values' by examining people's relationships to the natural, social, and technological environment they live in.<sup>36</sup>

There are two primary problems in Fenstermaker's approach. First, his approach tends to limit subject matter to belletristic works. Second, the approach tends to restrict student writing to literary analysis.

At the opposite pole are arguments that espouse the notion that composition classes should aim at a more natural voice. Lou Kelly, author of From Dialogue to Discourse, has emerged as a national leader of this viewpoint. The sterility, which typifies much student composition, comes about in part because students frequently write from a prescriptive

<sup>36</sup>John J. Fenstermaker, "Literature in the Composition Class," College Composition and Communication, 28 (1977), 37.

model (literary criticism) to a singular audience (the professor) about a single discipline (literature).

If writing is to be an exciting experience, it must offer a variety of models and it must come from different sources. David R. Pichaske writing in College English suggests that only a liberal approach to 101 English offers much promise for making the experience enjoyable and meaningful. The following rhetorical questions suggest a broad range of materials as a base for effective communication:

Here is a possibility to be considered: would we not be truer to our discipline (writing, not lit. crit.) and our students if we aimed more consciously at this general, non-academic, 'popular' expository style, and left the other disciplines (including lit. crit. ) to teach their own styles? Would not the quality of freshman writing improve immeasurably if we changed models? Would not our students be more enthusiastic imitating some of those magazines than they are imitating the sample papers found in most comp. handbooks and readers?<sup>37</sup>

The writing process which at many colleges is at the center of required English courses demands, as Carl Klaus suggests, an interdisciplinary approach which should encourage students to take courses in areas such as psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics.<sup>38</sup> While Klaus' suggestion by

<sup>37</sup>David R. Pichaske, "Freshman Composition: What is this Shit?" College English, 38 (1976), 119.

<sup>38</sup>Carl Klaus, "Public Opinion and Professional Belief," College Composition and Communication, 27 (1976), 337-339.

this method is more pluridisciplinary than interdisciplinary, there is a need to broaden the base of writing as a process. The interdisciplinary nature of the graduate writing programs at the University of Southern California, under the direction of Ross Winterowd, and at the University of Iowa, under the leadership of Klaus, have achieved acclaim. The National Endowment for the Humanities in 1977 awarded a major grant to the University of Iowa to establish an institute to help directors of freshman composition. Klaus has been named as the director.

Current Reform Efforts Indicate Need for  
Interdisciplinary Humanities

An apparent side effect of an over-specialized, fragmented, industrial society is boredom. Theodore Gross sees boredom as the parent of anger and rebellion. He agrees with Erich Fromm's idea that the man who has no real interest in life will turn to violence.<sup>39</sup> There are many reasons why college humanities students are bored. Courses are often prescriptive and sterile. Literature courses, which have tremendous potential to excite and motivate students entering all professional fields, are fragmented along narrow national lines, restricted by both genre and time. English studies have the potential to be at the center in

<sup>39</sup>Theodore L. Gross, "The American Scholar Reconsidered," in Prospects, p. 32.

new curriculum designs. Many English programs are too past-oriented for many students, especially in the first two years of college. More non-traditional students are entering the classroom. They are older and more career oriented; they are less inclined to be "comfortable with a traditional academic experience."<sup>40</sup> Teaching older, more mature students may well suggest moving away from some traditional programs.

The involvement of students in the planning and execution of course work is characteristic of interdisciplinary humanities. Joseph Kau, an English literature professor at the University of Hawaii, writes about using a "corporate approach" in which student groups make presentations and, thereby, share in the teaching load of a course which emphasizes major English authors. Professor Kau's approach attempts to draw students out by having them assume "a major portion of the teaching responsibilities." His approach shifts part of the teaching responsibility to students, who have no teaching experience, yet are expected to teach Donne, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Fielding, Swift and Johnson.<sup>41</sup> Such approaches to teaching college English courses illustrate teacher frustration. On the other hand, both literature and writing

<sup>40</sup> Bernard J. Luskin, "A Portable Course with Pop Culture," New Directions for Community Colleges, 3, No. 4 (1975), 10.

<sup>41</sup> Joseph Kau, "The Corporate Approach to Introductory Literature Courses," College English, 38 (1976), p. 50-51.

classes are frequently more meaningful for students when they have an active role in their development.

The past-oriented curricula of many humanities programs may be too restrictive for young, talented, conventional students, too. Many writers appeal for a humanities curriculum which speaks, at least in part, to contemporary issues. Harold Taylor advocates a humanities curriculum which includes the interest and the "present lives" of the students.<sup>42</sup> Across the country students have been instrumental in instituting reform in college curricula. Janet Shoenfeld concludes that the significance of student impact upon curriculum change has been substantial:

Their impact in the content of the academic program is evident in the proliferation of problem-centered courses dealing with urgent social and political issues of the day. Their effect on the structure of the curriculum is clear in the growth of interdisciplinary, independent, and field studies which call for a new, more flexible, and essentially more demanding relationships among students, instructors, and institutions.<sup>43</sup>

Reform efforts in higher education clearly illustrate the potential of interdisciplinary humanities. General education is moving back in vogue after a decade of course

<sup>42</sup>Harold Taylor, "The Arts and the Humanities," in The Humanities in the Schools, ed. Harold Taylor (New York: Citation Press, 1968), p.67.

<sup>43</sup>Janet Shoenfeld, Student-Initiated Changes in the Academic Curriculum (ERIC ED 065 105), p. 33.

proliferation in which many institutions jettisoned specific requirements. Currently under consideration are reform efforts at the following prominent institutions:

At Middlebury College, the reform movement required this year, for the first time, that students take at least one "foundation" course from three of four academic divisions during their first two years.

At Cornell, a committee on general education called for a greater number of interdisciplinary courses and for increased attention to general education.

At Stanford, seven separate task forces are trying to determine "what is fundamental to undergraduate education." The discussion centers on a proposal to introduce a university-wide course on Western culture.

At Johns Hopkins, president Steven Muller recently urged a return to general education because, he said, "We're turning out highly technical and highly skilled people who are literally barbarians."<sup>44</sup>

At the heart of the current reform movements is the need to integrate knowledge in undergraduates, preferably as early as possible.

Teachers are responding to curriculum revision by creating courses which have considerable interdisciplinary content. Frequently, what has been considered primarily to be the content of the English departments ends up in the domain of the sciences and social sciences. Literature is widely taught in other disciplines. Composition, too, is

<sup>44</sup>Schiefelbein, p. 18.

used in interesting ways in disciplines other than those in English departments.<sup>45</sup> Composition and literature are widely used in college sociology and psychology classes. Teachers from a wide range of disciplines apparently sense the exciting possibilities of integrating their disciplines with literature and composition.

There are problems, however, when teachers use literature in contexts that are too narrow. Barry Marks explains how a political science professor used Willie Stark of All the King's Men to illustrate a political role; by using this narrow focus, he missed the more significant concern for Willie as a whole man.<sup>46</sup> If Brave New World were taught from the single perspective of genetics or politics, its richness would be adulterated by an approach that would be too narrow. Good literature tends to be interdisciplinary in scope and should be treated as such.

The summaries of interdisciplinary teaching projects speak frequently about the enthusiasm which the projects generate among participating faculty. The following description of the exhilarating feeling which can be generated is Richard Harp's analysis of faculty renewal which resulted

<sup>45</sup>James R. Squire, "The Collision of the Basic Movement with Current Research on Language," The University of Chicago and Illinois Humanities Council Convention, Chicago, Illinois, 22 June 1978.

<sup>46</sup>Barry A. Marks, "Interdisciplinary Studies and the English Department," Prospects for the 70's, pp. 120-121.

from a great books approach to an integrated program at Kansas University:

It can certainly be said that the teachers in the project have never done more exciting teaching. Although a dedication to teaching is required, research is not abandoned; rather, the fruit of one's reading, which cannot concern scholarly minutiae, must be brought directly into the classroom where conversations, not presentations, among the faculty are held and where all of one's experiences must be used as a resource.<sup>47</sup>

The holistic process, which interdisciplinary courses tend to develop, is a refreshing departure from the more narrow strictures in which humanities teachers so frequently work.

Intimations are coming from various disciplines which indicate a growing concern about the teaching of values in the classroom. There are feelings abroad which suggest the humanities are failing to deal effectively with values.

What does the teaching of values imply? To Levi it means to communicate the "emotional quality of the feelings which attend their conceptualism and the obligation toward choice or avoidance."<sup>48</sup> To others, it means to acquaint students with an intellectual awareness, without "choice" or "avoidance" considered. To others, it may suggest

<sup>47</sup>Richard L. Harp, "Practicing What we Preach; Using the Classics to Teach the Classics," College English, 37 (1976), 489.

<sup>48</sup>Levi, p. 48.



interesting research possibilities. There is ample evidence to indicate that disciplines which have traditionally been associated with the cognitive domain are currently explaining themselves as value oriented:

Economics:

The facts of affluence, interdependence externalities, technological progress; the concepts of opportunity costs and social imbalance; the principles of human resource development and institutional adjustment--are relevant to a whole range of value issues.<sup>49</sup>

Fine Arts:

It [a fine arts proposal] could very well serve as the model, the means by which we might rescue the rest of the school curriculum from the value-free, value-neutral, goal-less meaninglessness into which it has fallen.<sup>50</sup>

Psychology:

We can, in principle have a descriptive naturalistic science of human values...We can study the highest values or goals of human beings, as we study the values of ants or horses....<sup>51</sup>

Psychology, Sociology or Philosophy:

The college which is serious about value curriculum reform should carry out a long range testing program seeking to ascertain the values and value changes in students. This could be conducted by internal services of the college, in cooperation

<sup>49</sup> Robert Darcy, "Economic Education, Human Values, and the Quality of Life," in Humanistic Frontiers in American Education, p. 110.

<sup>50</sup> Abraham Maslow, "Education, Art, and Peak Experiences," in Humanistic Frontiers in American Education, p. 193.

<sup>51</sup> Abraham Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1962), p. 167.

with appropriate departments, such as psychology, sociology, or philosophy.<sup>52</sup>

The humanities clearly need to be rescued, and there are those who clearly intend to rescue them.

### English Departments and Interdisciplinary Studies

English departments should seriously consider ways of implementing humanistic principles. Such an effort could be facilitated in part by making a commitment to develop an interdisciplinary course in which literature and composition could serve as the work areas for problems and questions which face individuals and societies. Earl McGrath points out that even if half of the curriculum were made up of "broad instructional units" which aim at the integration of "knowledge and values" there would still be time for an intensive major.<sup>53</sup>

The increasing specialization of knowledge expressed in terms of course proliferation in college became the trademark of the American high school in the 1960's. The wide range of semester electives in most high schools may have helped to contribute to the wide-spread demise of such time-tested courses as the English literature survey.

<sup>52</sup>Gerald F. Kreyche and Andrew T. Kopan, "Value Education and the Private College," Philosophic Research and Analysis, 6, No. 5 (1976), 4.

<sup>53</sup>Earl McGrath, Values and American Higher Education (ERIC ED 130 551), p. 20.

Complicating the problem, the unionized teacher, who now has more security and clout, may be unwilling to compromise his teaching assignment. Allan Glathorn's narrative sketch of a "typical English teacher" is probably frighteningly close to reality:

She's been teaching for ten years and is getting tired of teaching but sees no way out. Jobs are so scarce that she's not about to move. She has had too many inservice courses that seemed totally unproductive. She's becoming somewhat cynical about educational innovations; once she was enthusiastic in her support of the changes of the sixties, but now she feels cheated somehow that those changes did not seem to last. But she jealously defends one important change, the elective courses that enable her to teach what she wants to teach and to try to get the students she wants to have.<sup>54</sup>

The extent to which the proliferated, piecemeal high school curriculum has affected students in their college years is speculative; there is, however, a high level of correlation between the near demise of English literature, excepting Shakespeare, on both levels and the increasing popularity of composition and media courses.

A study focusing upon curricular offerings in college and university English programs in twenty-three American institutions clearly points to trends which suggest the plausibility for English departments to consider new

<sup>54</sup>What's Really Basic in the Language Arts?, Proc. of a conference on high school and college language arts curricula, Feb. 1976 (Iowa City: American College Testing Program, 1977), p. 22.

programs or courses. The following generalizations are representative of a large number of programs in the MLA study:

Shakespeare appears on more lists of most popular courses than does any other English offering. British literature runs a far distant second to American literature in student preferences, with British literature before 1900 the least favored of all. Any course in modern literature is likely to be more popular than its counterparts from earlier times. Specialized period courses--for example, eighteenth-century poetry, nineteenth-century prose--vie with survey courses for the designation of least chosen courses in the curriculum. In fact, the eighteenth century is the period most often ignored by students, with Victorian and early English literature in close competition. Single author, thematic, and topic courses are popular; both narrow and broad historical framework courses are not. The juxtaposition of psychology with literature invariably brings students to a class; courses in fantasy, the quest for identity, myths and archetypes, for example, are extremely popular on every campus where they are offered. While courses in film and creative writing have very high enrollments in English departments all across the country, offerings in language and linguistics, in general, do not enjoy such popularity. The teaching of advanced rhetorical writing to students in majors other than English is increasing very rapidly; and freshman courses in writing appear to be receiving more attention than in the past. In fact, a trend seems to be emerging; the entire department is becoming more and more involved in both freshman and advanced skills offerings.<sup>55</sup>

While English courses could be offered within an interdisciplinary humanities framework, interdisciplinarity should

<sup>55</sup> Modern Language Association of America, Options for Teaching English (New York: MLA, 1975), Introduction.

not be explained as a panacea or as a replacement for the single discipline approach. Interdisciplinary courses should not replace literature from the past. Clearly the possibilities of dealing with such courses as "psychology and literature," "fantasy," and the "quest for identity" in an interdisciplinary framework are not limited to the twentieth century.

There is, however, as this chapter has pointed out, a need to overcome the pervasiveness of specialization and compartmentalization. An interdisciplinary approach to the humanities offers English departments promising alternatives to fragmented curriculums. The possibility of implementing interdisciplinary humanities courses or programs by college English departments is too promising to leave unexamined.

## CHAPTER II

### MODELS FOR HUMANITIES PROGRAMS

This chapter will describe and analyze a wide range of interdisciplinary courses and programs in a search for characteristics which make them appealing. Interdisciplinarity has been successfully implemented in institutions of all sizes and types; consequently, there will be no attempt to restrict the institutions included by kind. Programs described were selected for differing reasons. Choice was ultimately weighted in favor of programs which

1. have wide appeal and measured success.
2. have promising designs and which can be replicated in part or in total.
3. seem institutionally sound. The programs which cross several discipline lines may be more institutionally sound in very small colleges than in large universities. For example, an art teacher, a drama teacher and a music teacher whose classes can generate only part-time loads, could well work with one or more English teachers to create a broadly interdisciplinary course in a small college. An idea which is institutionally sound in one college or university may not be in another.
4. follow student interests and usually echo trends.
5. usually could be taught by one teacher or by a team.
6. have at least one unique characteristic.

7. fit the modern view of the humanities outlined in Chapter I or which could be adjusted to fit the outline.
8. focus primarily upon students in the first two years of college.
9. offer the promise of integration of subject matter to offset the cafeteria offerings which most college students experienced in high school.

Sorting out promising interdisciplinary programs is a most difficult task. First, the programs which are described and explained in both published and unpublished reports often appear as promotions of successful programs. Second, few reports are available from outside consultants which could offer a more objective evaluation. Third, most reporting occurs when excitement is high. Consequently, the literature dealing with interdisciplinary humanities programs projects a high degree of excitement.

Another major problem deals with the vastly different nature of institutions which have developed programs. A program at the University of Southern California, which will be discussed in this chapter, has a structure which might well be adopted by a community junior college. The complementing nature of the readings and composition components could well serve as a model for most institutions. Yet, the program with its high-powered reading lists and announced elitist proclivities make its wide-spread use questionable.

Other models, such as the Great Books approach at the University of Kansas relying upon classical rhetoric and

the memorization of English poetry, may be developed strictly within the English department. Other promising models, notably the ones at Lehigh University, attempt some fusion between science and the humanities.

The Great Books format may be implemented as an interdisciplinary course. A Great Books course has the potential to integrate ideas and knowledge which cover centuries of time and range widely in scope. While most integrated humanities courses use the Great Books format to some degree, there are courses and programs which are interdisciplinary and follow the Great Books design closely.

A Great Books approach was developed for 250 freshmen-sophomore students at the University of Kansas; the program design is interdisciplinary and requires students to take twenty-four hours to complete. The program, which stresses philosophy, rhetoric, and literature, is taught by lectures and seminars. The uniqueness of the program lies partly in its strong emphasis upon the use of memory in the writing process. Students are required to memorize ten English poems each semester which provide words and ideas to enhance their writing.<sup>1</sup> The memorization of the poems echoes the importance which classical rhetoricians placed upon memory. The approach gives students a positive base to work from and agrees with Edward P.J. Corbett's contention that students are inhibited by negative

<sup>1</sup>Harp, p. 478.



prescriptions articulated in handbooks. The hope of the classical approach lies essentially in its positive advice to students.<sup>2</sup> Philosophy in the Kansas program moves away from the history of philosophies and attempts to "make love the motive...and wisdom the object."<sup>3</sup> The literature courses heavily focus upon Greek, Roman, and English classics including the long Odyssey, the Republic, the Aeneid, and the shorter "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," and "Lucifer by Starlight."

A problem which the Kansas program overcomes, in Harp's view, is the "contemporary antipathy to the idea of liberal education." Harp argues that once students have experienced the joy of memory, "reading Plato solely in order to remember Plato rather than outlining him for purposes of a test," they can enjoy the humanities.<sup>4</sup> The Kansas program illustrates the interdisciplinary potential which can be developed within the English department.

Another possibility for English departments to consider is the inauguration of American Studies courses. The American Studies Association's definition of the American studies approach is

<sup>2</sup>Edward P. J. Corbett, Preface, Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. viii.

<sup>3</sup>Harp, p. 479.

<sup>4</sup>Harp, p. 488.

the study--in a single course or through a combination of courses--of the subject matter of America's past or present in which an effort is made to integrate the methods and knowledge of more than one discipline.<sup>5</sup>

The approach in American Studies frequently avoids the chronological and survey approaches which often characterize American history and literature courses.

The content in American Studies programs is often made interdisciplinary by a thematic focus which is developed along social lines. The "Contemporary Civilization" course at Northwestern Michigan College is defined as "an introduction to the principle [sic] currents and dilemmas of contemporary civilization."<sup>6</sup> Texts in the program which include Catch 22, The Enormous Room, The Invisible Man, and Babbitt, make the course appear to be essentially an American literature course with a problem focus.

The "Southwestern Studies Program" at the Colorado College, Colorado Springs, Colorado, directed by an English professor, is widely interdisciplinary. The program which emerged from a 1971 NEH Planning Grant focuses the "historical, social, economic, and artistic contributions of various cultures which comprise the American Southwest." The program has helped to attract minority students and four

<sup>5</sup>Lohof, p. 49.

<sup>6</sup>Lohof, p. 50.

minority faculty members.<sup>7</sup> The successful development of the program in the first three years of operation which is noted in a "Progress Report to the National Endowment for the Humanities" was due in large part to the interest and work of volunteer committees of students, faculty, and administration.<sup>8</sup>

If English departments do not assume the lead in American Studies, who will? History professor Daniel Weinberg from Case Western Reserve advocates the use of fiction and biography to improve the perspectives history students have of the immigrant's family and community. Weinberg pleads for history teachers to use fiction and autobiography because they

give loud, clear voice to a major influence on American life. Ease of access to them, their drama and intimacy and the distinctive nature of the insights they offer are persuasive criteria which warrant their consideration as serious educational resources. To ignore, or limit the place of fiction and autobiography in the classroom is to disregard profoundly important documents.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup>National Endowment for the Humanities, "Southwestern Studies Program," in Selected Project Descriptions in Higher Education 1975 (Washington, D.C.: NEH, 1975), p. 23.

<sup>8</sup>Progress Report to the National Endowment for the Humanities on the Colorado College Southwestern Studies Program (E1 9546-76-464). Second year 1974-1975 (ERIC ED 124 465), p. 15.

<sup>9</sup>Daniel E. Weinberg, "Viewing the Immigrant Experience in America Through Fiction and Autobiography--With a Select Bibliography," History Teacher, 9 (1976), 424.

Weinberg argues that history teachers should be teaching Giants in the Earth, Studs Lonigan and The Jungle. His argument is perhaps valid, but a warning should be sounded: When literature is used primarily to illustrate, its greater potentials are sold short. Literature teachers should have a major role in American Studies programs to help secure the broad potential which this interdisciplinary approach holds.

There are many directions possible for American Studies. Amos St. Germain lists some established directions:

Chronology -----	West Georgia College
Thematic -----	Southern Tech
Cultural Anthropology ---	University of Pennsylv- vania
Problem solving -----	University of California at Davis
Liberal Arts -----	Emory <sup>10</sup>

St. Germain argues that American Studies offers the best opportunity to "produce a 'general' education in the best sense."<sup>11</sup> This argument can be made more valid when an interdisciplinary approach is used which puts literature at the center.

History teachers are not alone in advocating the use of literature to enhance and strengthen their programs.

<sup>10</sup> Amos St. Germain, American Studies and American History (ERIC ED 123 168), pp. 4-5.

<sup>11</sup> St. Germain, p. 4.

Foreign language teachers are acutely aware of their declining destinies and are advocating interdisciplinary courses. Paula Lewis at Howard University suggests an interdisciplinary course in French civilization which would use literature as the primary means to deal with the culture and civilization of France.<sup>12</sup> Alain Renoir, addressing classics teachers, sees survival of the Graeco-Roman tradition through interdisciplinary courses, especially English courses which offer literature and composition. Renoir cites the denegrating effect upon the English department at Harvard when freshman composition was wrested from English and placed under a university-wide committee. He warns that English is emerging as property of speech, American linguistics and the social sciences departments.<sup>13</sup> English departments should consider offering European Studies courses or other area courses jointly with foreign language teachers. The summer session or perhaps the interim term, if a college has one, would be an excellent time to develop such a program.

The advances in technology and science have helped to

<sup>12</sup>Paula Gilbert Lewis, "An Interdisciplinary Approach to Teaching Foreign Language," Modern Language Journal, 60 (1976), 251-253.

<sup>13</sup>Alain Renoir, A Future for the Past: Remarks on State and Responsibilities of the Classics in America, The Malt Bulletin (Missoula: University of Montana, 1975), pp. 26-34 (ERIC ED 108 474).

create immense social and ethical problems. In 1969 the Institute of Society, Ethics and the Life Sciences was formed. The Institute, which has grown significantly in number and prestige, set its goals to

1. raise the level of examination of ethical and social problems arising out of advances in the life sciences;
2. assist universities, medical and professional schools, and policy-making bodies to make consideration of ethical problems an integral part of the educational and policy-making process; and
3. bring the importance of ethical and social problems in the life sciences to the attention of professionals, policy-makers, researchers, and the general public.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, twin advisory committees from the National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities have been formed to encourage proposals for grants from institutions to either the NSF or the NEH or by joint funding.<sup>15</sup>

To what extent the humanities and the sciences can be integrated is unknown. Certainly their interests, methods, and language have little in common. Levi clearly illustrates the differences:

<sup>14</sup>Selected Project Descriptions in Higher Education 1975, p. 52.

<sup>15</sup>Tenth Annual Report, p. 51.

Science is the study of nature; the humanities are the study of the works of man. Science utilizes a method which adheres rigorously to the categories of the understanding; the humanities emphasize those qualities which are contributed by the imagination. Science uses a language which is impersonal, referential, objective; the humanities cultivate a language which is dramatic, emotional, and drenched with human purpose.<sup>16</sup>

With these dramatic differences there is little doubt why few courses have developed which have attempted any kind of integration between the sciences and the humanities. Yet, there should be serious attempts made to fuse understanding between these divergent areas; our very survival may depend upon it.

Science fiction, which by its very nature is interdisciplinary, has successfully made its way into the English curriculum. Teachers frequently deal with the major classics in the field. Dave Samuelson suggests using science fiction to focus upon the future through themes, such as "population explosion, war, natural and man-made catastrophes, the exploration of the unknown, and the danger of technocracy" to illustrate the true interdisciplinary nature of science fiction.<sup>17</sup>

Imaginative science teachers, too, recognize the interdisciplinary issues which the humanities and sciences are

<sup>16</sup>Levi, p. 56.

<sup>17</sup>Dave Samuelson, Proposal for the Mandatory Use of Science Fiction in the Classroom (ERIC ED 089 277), pp. 1-9.

concerned with and are offering interdisciplinary courses through their departments. A science teacher at Central Piedmont Community College inaugurated such a course in 1976 with the following general objective which in part says:

To have the student become aware of the effect which technology has had on literature and the arts, and vice versa, and how the interaction of the two may prove to be of increasing importance in the future.<sup>18</sup>

The course may be taken for either science credit, which also requires a laboratory experience, or for humanities credit without the laboratory experience. The topics of the course and the texts are heavily bent toward eco problems, futuristic concerns, and survival. A sample of texts included are: Bronowski, The Ascent of Man; Dubos, The Dream of Reason; Fuller, Utopia or Oblivion; Huxley, Brave New World; Toffler, Future Shock.<sup>19</sup>

Amos St. Germain, a science professor at the Southern Technical Institute, has prepared and taught a course entitled "Man and Technology" to two year engineering technicians and four year engineering technologists. The course requires:

<sup>18</sup> Aaron McAlexander, A New Departmental Course: Science and Society (ERIC ED 119 776), p. 36.

<sup>19</sup> McAlexander, pp. 22-23.



Kurt Vonnegut ----- Cat's Cradle

Focus: The concern for "connecting technology and general culture."

Buckminster Fuller --- Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth

Focus: "Fuller's demand for a new generalism."

Edgar Kaufmann and ---- Frank Lloyd Wright: Ben Raeburn, eds. Writings and Buildings

Focus: "The continuation of the Emersonian tradition of the nature of materials."

Robert Sommer ----- Personal Space

Focus: "The design of daily living space--prisons, schools, dormitories, hospitals, and apartment complexes."

Erich Fromm ----- The Revolution of Hope

Focus: The spiritual impact of technology.<sup>20</sup>

Germain expresses the need to focus upon literature courses which deal with technological problems.

The Central Piedmont and Southern Technical Institute courses point to the possibility of initiating undergraduate courses without massive funding. Other courses, such as "Science and Literature: A Study in Values," which focused upon evolution and was team taught by a literature and a science professor at Westminster College in Pennsylvania, combined works and ideas without long term interdisciplinary commitments.<sup>21</sup> The long range commitments, however, offer the promise of incorporating humanities with science in a structured design.

<sup>20</sup> Amos St. Germain, American Studies and the Technical Curriculum: Man and Technology (ERIC ED 123 169), pp. 6-7.

<sup>21</sup> DeSieno and Horn, p. 61.

A broad-ranging program which has been successful in fusing these disciplines exists at Lehigh University. From a growing number of courses, a minor in "Technology and Human Values" has emerged. The program of courses is designed "to foster undergraduate courses concerned with the interrelationship between technological advance and the quality of life."<sup>22</sup> The courses which may be taken to satisfy General Studies requirements are interdisciplinary in subject matter and are frequently team taught.

The English department offers or co-offers eighteen courses out of 58 in the Lehigh program. The following courses are a sample listing which illustrate the interesting and interdisciplinary dimensions which characterize the program:

The Industrial City and The Urban Novel  
(Dept. of History and Dept. of English)

The course will focus on Chicago, Boston, and mill towns as a distinct type to understand how industry and technology have created distinct physical environments and images in different places. Readings will draw from historical, geographic, economic, and political studies and from literature set in those places.

Leisure in a Technological Society  
(Dept. of Psychology and Dept. of English)

Theory and practice of self reliance in today's world. In addition to reading and discussing several pertinent books, the students will

<sup>22</sup>"The Humanities Perspectives on Technology Program," Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, n.d., n.p. (Mimeographed).

become members of a legally registered corporation set up just for this class. As members of the corporation they will get a bank loan, purchase a south-side house, work on redesigning and remodeling the house, then sell the house and divide the profits (if any).<sup>23</sup>

There are many advantages of obtaining an NEH grant for the development of humanities programs: The time to work out courses and the money which provides for workshops and for research are significant stimulators for programs. Institutions which do not obtain NEH grants may obtain detailed descriptions of funded programs, and, in so doing, are able to replicate all or parts of courses or programs. The course descriptions of the Lehigh courses are quite detailed and could serve as models for other courses.

During the past decade a melange of courses and programs has developed in American colleges and universities which tends to focus upon contemporary issues and new modes of experiences. While many courses will be short lived, there are others which bear investigation by English teachers or departments.

The study of film, which is by nature interdisciplinary, offers promise. In 1974 the University of Indiana started a program of studies called "Comparative Literature and the Arts." One of the three focuses deals with the study of film

<sup>23</sup>"Course Description," Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, n.d., n.p. (Mimeographed).

as a humanistic art.<sup>24</sup> Another program at University College at Michigan State uses film in an "American Expression" core course which has as its primary focus the teaching of writing. An empirical study done in the late sixties which compared writing skills of students who took the film course with a central group of students who read the same material showed a significant year-long improvement in writing skills for the students in the film course and an even more significant improvement during the first semester.<sup>25</sup>

There are three problems which must be faced when film is used extensively in classes. First, film is expensive. The Indiana program began in part through an NEH grant. The Michigan State program is self-supporting but financially is "facing difficulties."<sup>26</sup> Second, there is an aura of suspicion among traditional humanists about using film to teach literature or composition. Third, many teachers lack suitable backgrounds to teach film, beyond using it to illustrate. Henry B. Aldrich suggests the cross-listing of film-study courses which he believes should

<sup>24</sup>Selected Project Descriptions in Higher Education 1975, p. 50.

<sup>25</sup>Edward Recchia, America on Film: A Humanities Composition Course (ERIC ED 103 880), pp. 8-9.

<sup>26</sup>Recchia, pp. 8-9.

be taught in interdisciplinary programs.<sup>27</sup> The powerful, stimulating effects which quality film can produce upon the human mind may be tapped with positive results.

The idea of approaching the humanities under the umbrella of major thematic questions which cover broad areas through modules was inaugurated at the Miami-Dade Community College North Campus in 1970. The program started with two "overriding goals":

1. To assist the student, by means of particular disciplines, in the process of self-actualizing.
2. To create within the student an awareness of his environment (natural, social, and aesthetic) and his relation to it.<sup>28</sup>

The student, rather than the discipline, is at the center of the Miami-Dade program. The program uses modules and short-range objectives and has produced "Micro" courses such as "The Function of Drama," "Value Systems," "Learning to be Happy," "Love," "Power Structures," and "Eastern Consciousness."<sup>29</sup> Subject matter in the "Micro" courses comes from both contemporary life and traditional sources.

<sup>27</sup> Henry B. Aldrich, Film Studies a Time for Action. The Michigan Speech Association Journal, 9, No. 1 (Ypsilanti: Eastern Michigan University, 1974), p. 27 (ERIC ED 096 705).

<sup>28</sup> Richard Paul Janaro, "Micronizing the Humanities: A Communal Approach," New Directions for Community Colleges, 3, No. 4 (1975), 69.

<sup>29</sup> Janaro, p. 73.

The unique nature of the structure is the three-to-four week emphasis upon questions that cut across discipline lines.

Does the modular concept suggest a greater degree of compartmentalization? If the modules are tied together thematically, they offer the promise of integrating ideas and knowledge. On the other hand, if the modules are presented in isolation, they may lead to greater compartmentalization. The English department at Pfeiffer College in North Carolina has offered micro courses, "pet" subjects of the professors, on "John Donne," "Surrealism and Dadaism," "Old Southwestern Humor," and "The Arthurian Legend."<sup>30</sup> At Pfeiffer the modules have stimulated students to take more three-hour courses from professors who taught the modules. The modules, however, at Pfeiffer come through as "micro" courses which tend to isolate knowledge rather than to integrate it. The integration of knowledge could result from modules which are tied together thematically. The primary danger, however, of a modular approach is in compartmentalization and isolation of knowledge. A modular program would have to be carefully coordinated to be interdisciplinary.

The University of Denver has developed a humanities program which is antithetical to the "micro" or modular concept in time, scope, and purpose. The program, which is

<sup>30</sup>Options for the Teaching of English, p. 74.

called "integrated studies," offers a student the option of taking the courses for either 10 or 15 quarter hours. Credit for the courses applies to the general education requirements in the humanities, the sciences and the social sciences. The idea offers the student an option to work intensely in such block areas as Victorian America and Elizabethan England for a semester. The program designers say the program "provides a rich integration of methods, points of view, and materials not commonly found in 3, 4, or 5 hour courses."<sup>31</sup>

The Denver program began in 1970 with two block courses: "Classical Athens" and "Black Studies." The program has since grown to ten courses. Furthermore, the popularity of the block approach has spread to both the sciences and social sciences which have used the humanities model to structure courses.<sup>32</sup>

Mel Strawn, director of the program, applauds the interdisciplinary nature of the program by saying that the "Instructors and lecturers for these programs are drawn from several departments throughout the university, thus affording a diversity of knowledge and talent."<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup>"Fall '77-Integrated Studies," Denver University, Denver, Colorado, n.d., n.p. (Mimeographed).

<sup>32</sup>Selected Project Descriptions in Higher Education 1975, p. 32.

<sup>33</sup>Letter received from Mel Strawn, 7 November 1977.

Block programs are worthy of consideration because they have the extraordinary capability of being able to integrate knowledge. They are frequently interdisciplinary, as at Denver, or pluridisciplinary, as is the Iowa University "Literature Semester." They should be flexible enough not to discourage students. For example, grades in a nine-hour block could be awarded in three-credit segments. The block idea offers a format which has the capability of making individual and small group instruction a reality.

Courses which encourage students to examine current and future issues offer many possibilities for English departments. College students enjoy speculating and find programs such as the "Future Think Program" at San Jose City College interesting and challenging.<sup>34</sup> Contemporary interests frequently have roots in fertile literary traditions which can develop into exciting courses. An interdisciplinary Future Studies course at the University of Wisconsin, Superior, focused upon human consciousness and covered such subjects as "meditation, Yoga, altered states of awareness (e.g., dreams, hypnotic trance, mystical ecstasy), psychic phenomena, biofeedback, reason and intuition...."<sup>35</sup> The course relied upon literature and

<sup>34</sup>Future Think Program, San Jose City College, Spring Semester, 1974: Final Report of Evaluation, 1974 (ERIC ED 101 774), pp. 1-16.

<sup>35</sup>Wilma Clark, "Literature, Language, and Human Consciousness," College English, 37 (1976), 605.



psychology and attempted to determine whether the human conscience can be transformed. The approach was to use high-interest themes as seminar topics to get at serious literature. The following examples illustrate the wide range of literature used in the thematic approach:

Consider how American transcendentalism anticipated the current research into the unity of mind and body (titles here and under the topics below are, of course, merely examples of possible sources): Emerson, "The Oversoul," "Experience," Nature; Thoreau, Walden; Whitman, "There Was a Child Went Forth."

Consider how the works of T. S. Eliot reflect Hanna's view that the overly analytical man is not fully conscious or fully alive: The Waste-land, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "Gerontion," "The Hollow Men," The Rock.

Explore the nineteenth-century romantic view that a specific role of the poet was to show readers the path between "reality and their own souls"--that is, to help people attain full consciousness: Emerson, "The Poet," Whitman, "Preface to 1855 Edition of Leaves of Grass," Democratic Vistas, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking."<sup>36</sup>

The thematic nature of many interdisciplinary programs deemphasize genre and time periods is noted in the Wisconsin program.

A program which has many possible implications for higher education is the Humanities Cluster College which emerged in 1973 at Bowling Green State University. The Bowling Green program, which developed as a combative force

<sup>36</sup>Clark, p. 607.

to fragmentation and quantification, is an interdisciplinary program which fuses disciplines of "Art, Classics, English, Music, Philosophy, and Speech (theater)."<sup>37</sup> The program features a cluster concept with triadic structure. First, the disciplines are clustered; second, the faculty and students are clustered in a dormitory, the classes conducted in the lounge; third, the students in the cluster live in the dormitory.<sup>38</sup> The course represents a fifteen-credit student commitment for a semester and has passed from the experimental stage to the institutional level, which exemplifies a successful appraisal of the program by students, faculty, and administration. While interdisciplinarity is at the center of the Cluster College concept, some cluster or core experiments aim to achieve practical goals such as a lower drop-out rate. The following general objectives were stated in the core experiment at the City University of New York, Staten Island Community College in 1973:

1. to facilitate the breakdown of traditional diversions between disciplines,
2. to promote greater intimacy in the classroom,

<sup>37</sup>Humanities Cluster College (ERIC ED 087 282), p. 7.

<sup>38</sup>Virginia Magada and Michael Moore, "The Humanities Cluster College at Bowling Green State University: Its Middle Years," Liberal Education, 62 (1975), 101.

3. to help students perceive the teacher in a realistic, human way,
4. to encourage a transfer of knowledge and enthusiasm between the disciplines, and
5. to raise the level of achievement in academic areas--English, math and social science.<sup>39</sup>

Differences between core and non-core students in the college include: core students were able to interact better with other students and faculty than non-core students; core students made better grades, felt more involved, and were less inclined to drop courses.<sup>40</sup> These factors suggest that the humanistic orientation of the program can have meaningful results.

Many humanities programs are designed to satisfy part of general education requirements, and are, therefore, inclined to place greater stress upon the writing process. A discussion of two such programs follows.

A new program at Morehouse College which requires intensive short courses in "French, music, English, history, economics, political science and philosophy and religion" based upon thematic questions which bind the mini experiences stresses a "systematic pattern of language skills instruction; and the...exploration of the humanistic

<sup>39</sup> Roberta Vogel and Stan Shonbuch, Follow-Up Study: The Core Experiment in College Discovery (ERIC ED 081 431), p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Vogel and Shonbuch, pp. 6-22.

approach and humanistic values."<sup>41</sup> The Morehouse program consists of quarter-length modules which are called "Mirrors," a term selected from Alice's Looking Glass, "in which she saw not only herself but various images of the real world as well as interpretations and distortions of it."<sup>42</sup>

A unique characteristic of the Morehouse program is its focus upon writing skills. There is a service commitment in the program which notes that students will "acquire the minimum tools necessary for achieving success in expression and comprehension of college studies...."<sup>43</sup> The onus for composition rests within each Mirror regardless of its discipline area. The idea of emphasizing writing skills in the seven disciplines in the Morehouse program is admirable; and if the humanities principles and writing skills can be successfully integrated throughout the program, it may serve as a successful model. The time appears ripe for English departments to take the lead in developing more effective composition programs.

Another model which stresses composition is also

<sup>41</sup>"A Report: The Humanities Interdisciplinary Pilot Project (Mirror Project) at Morehouse College, 1970-1976," Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia, n.d., n.p. (Mimeographed).

<sup>42</sup>Selected Project Descriptions in Higher Education 1975, p. 95.

<sup>43</sup>Selected Project Descriptions in Higher Education 1975, p. 95.

attempting to revitalize the liberal arts through an interdisciplinary humanities approach at the University of Southern California. The program is optional and satisfies general education requirements at USC. A student has the following core options:

Core 101ab - Symbols and Structures (4+2)  
 Symbols and conceptual systems and the way they shape our lives through expression in literature, science, philosophy, mathematics, religion, music, and visual arts. (English composition laboratory)

Core 102ab - Quality of Life: Values and Life Styles (4+2)  
 Systematic reasoning about values and ways of living; classical and contemporary thought concerning "the good life"; impact of ethnicity, work, law, and culture on personal choice.

Core 113ab - The Process of Change in Science (4+2)  
 Critical problems in the development of scientific thought, studied as vehicles for understanding the content and structure of the sciences. Specific subject matter in selected scientific disciplines will be presented.

Core 104ab - Change and the Future (4+2)  
 Analysis of historical change; social and political theory and revolutionary thought; introduction to competing images of future states of affairs; the continuing process of change.<sup>44</sup>

A particularly interesting aspect of the USC program is the two-credit composition component which is part of the six-credit course. The 102 composition component requirement includes a "personal reflection, a compare-and-contrast

<sup>44</sup>"The Thematic Option," University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California, n.d., n.p.

essay, and a critical review."<sup>45</sup> Additionally a number of short papers designed at the teacher's discretion may be assigned. The compositions vary in number, length, and form in the different options. The 104 composition component, for example, requires two term papers.<sup>46</sup> The 101 course requires a paper every other week and students in the 113 composition component are required to write six essays.<sup>47</sup> The student who completes all of the core program must take the composition components and accumulates a total of eight credits.

"The Thematic Option" at USC offers interesting possibilities for structuring English classes. It brings together the "Great Books" approach and the "Thematic" approach in a setting which emphasizes discussion and composition. "The Thematic Option" is open to all freshman and sophomore students, but with a clear warning that the program "is designed for highly motivated students, and involves an extensive amount of reading and writing."<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup>"The Thematic Option: Fall 1977," University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California, n.d., n.p.

<sup>46</sup>"The Thematic Option," n.p.

<sup>47</sup>"The Thematic Option: Spring 1977," University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California, n.d., n.p.

<sup>48</sup>"The Thematic Option," n.p.

Replication of the format as an elective program or a required program could be accomplished with planning. The key to success with such a format would appear to rest more heavily upon selecting appropriate material for the students than it would upon the structure of the program itself.

Humanities programs which cut across many disciplines are usually more difficult to initiate than are courses which cross two disciplines. Two programs which cut across several discipline lines are the "Program for Integral Education," at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana, and "Humanities Program" at Wofford College in Spartanburg, South Carolina. Both programs were funded by the NEH. Both programs stress thematic approaches which tend to focus upon contemporary problems. The Earlham program is for sophomores while the Wofford program may lead from a freshman seminar to a major in humanities. The goals of the two programs have much in common; yet, the Earlham program with a sharper focus is probably healthier.

By limiting the program to seventy sophomores, Earlham has made its program special. It can satisfy six distribution requirements. The English department is increasing its participation in the program as it expands.<sup>49</sup> The "Progress Report for Year (1976-77)" to the NEH by Wofford

<sup>49</sup>Letter received from Len Clark, Earlham College, 26 October 1977.

College reflects a pessimistic attitude. The coordination of the cluster courses broke down, "a victim of apathy and indifference on the part of both faculty and students."

A possible explanation for the failure of the cluster courses is that the clusters were "structured around historical periods and geographical areas, probably limiting their appeal to those outside the department of history."<sup>50</sup>

Faculty commitment and cooperation, administration support, and adequate funding are necessary ingredients for successful broad-based humanities programs.

The nature of creativity, a subject which seems natural for English departments to develop, has been developed as an interdisciplinary endeavor at Fordham University by a psychology teacher and an art teacher.<sup>51</sup> The two teachers brought their classes, "Psychology of Creativity" and "Art and Investigation into Creativity" together to share ideas and develop projects. The students created poems, wrote book reviews, wrote research papers, wrote creative stories, produced a literary magazine, and composed music.<sup>52</sup> The

<sup>50</sup>"Progress Report for Year (1976-66) of Humanities Project Funded by NEH Grant ED 9410-73-404 at Wofford College," Wofford College, Spartanburg, South Carolina, n.d., n.p. (Mimeographed).

<sup>51</sup>George Domino and Vivienne Wechter, "Joint Teaching of Undergraduate Courses in Creativity," Teaching of Psychology, 3 (1976), 123-127.

<sup>52</sup>Domino and Wechter, pp. 123-127.



program sounds exciting. Also, it sounds very much like a course in creative writing. Writers through the centuries have written interesting, incisive comments about the creative process and how it works. A composition or literature teacher might well develop an interdisciplinary course based upon the Fordham model.

The literature in this chapter reveals the strengths of interdisciplinarity. The following list is an indicative sample of the strong appeal which interdisciplinarity has:

1. The atmosphere is more conducive for faculty-student cooperation.
2. A glowing enthusiasm for teaching emerges.
3. Interdisciplinary classes have lower attrition rates.
4. There is a stronger focus upon creativity.
5. The cross-listing of credit, which some institutions allow, helps attract students to discipline areas.
6. Students have an opportunity to deal with knowledge and ideas in a coherent, integral way.
7. Interdisciplinary classes bring about more student involvement.
8. Interdisciplinary classes can effectively integrate loosely organized, elective courses.
9. Interdisciplinary classes provide teachers from different disciplines an opportunity to work together in a meaningful way.

The programs discussed in this chapter clearly point to the interesting, nearly endless possibilities which exist in

interdisciplinary humanities courses. Some programs such as the Great Books may be worked out within English departments; others such as American Studies imply cooperation with other departments. Also, the emphasis upon programs varies widely: some programs emphasize discussion, others focus upon literature, and others emphasize composition. The integration of knowledge and the enthusiasm which are generated by most of the programs stand as significant reasons for English departments to consider implementing interdisciplinary humanities programs.

### CHAPTER III

#### INTERDISCIPLINARITY IN IOWA COLLEGES AND A SURVEY

Iowa colleges and universities are currently offering a wide range of interdisciplinary and interdepartmental humanities courses and programs. The University of Northern Iowa offers a number of interdisciplinary courses which are the core of an undergraduate humanities major. Drake University, Iowa State University, Northwestern College, and Marycrest College offer humanities majors which are interdepartmental in structure. Luther offers an interdepartmental minor in the humanities. Wartburg offers thirteen interdisciplinary courses which focus upon man from perspectives of art, literature, drama, the social sciences, and the sciences. Briar Cliff requires students to complete three quarters of a "Freshman Liberal Arts Program." Simpson requires a two semester freshman studies course with the title "The Self and Quest for Meaning." Morningside students are required to take an interdisciplinary seminar for three credits.

Though nearly all colleges offer interdisciplinary humanities courses, the two-year private colleges and community junior colleges tend to offer fewer interdisciplinary courses in the humanities than do the four-year

institutions. Kirkwood Community College offers a thematic course which uses art and music to create an integrated body of knowledge for a composition course. But most two-year institutions regard the humanities as separate disciplines to be studied as separate courses.

This chapter will focus upon the purposes, problems, costs, strengths and weaknesses of four existing interdisciplinary programs in Iowa institutions and a proposal for a program in a fifth institution. The five institutions in this study represent a wide range of differences in size, mission, student bodies, and faculties. The use of widely different institutions tends to offer credence to the idea that approaching the humanities in an interdisciplinary way is a frame of mind. A survey of college English chairpersons, college deans, and English majors is included. The results of the survey illustrate the wide interest and potential which interdisciplinarity holds for English departments.

The institutions which will be examined are Coe, the University of Iowa, Buena Vista, Grinnell, and Ottumwa Heights. These institutions were selected as the focus in this study for several reasons including:

1. The strong commitment and support of the programs by the English departments.
2. The wide range of differences in size, mission, and student bodies in the institutions.
3. The breadth of approaches used.

4. The different thrusts in the programs.
5. The essential applicability of the course material for English departments.

All of the institutions have programs which have been in continuous existence for several years with the exception of Buena Vista College. At Buena Vista a "Freshman Tutorial" program has been proposed and approved by the faculty. The developmental details for the implementation of the program are being worked out. The Buena Vista program will be discussed because of its unique characteristics and promise, and because it illustrates problems in the development of new programs.

Knowledge and understanding of the programs have come through examinations of course descriptions, syllabi, and instructional manuals. Also, discussions were held with teachers and administrators, and interviews made with persons who have in-depth understanding concerning the programs. Furthermore, the writer has a strong commitment to the interdisciplinary humanities concept which comes about through the English department due to his involvement in the Ottumwa Heights program.

#### Coe College: Introduction to Liberal Arts

Coe College, located in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, has a full-time enrollment of approximately one thousand students. Admission to the college is selective. The curriculum is generally innovative and students have only two required

courses to complete, a two-course, three credit sequence called Introduction to Liberal Arts (ILA).<sup>1</sup>

The ILA, developed in 1968, is an interdisciplinary program which uses a thematic approach to present ideas which have global interest and significance. The ILA courses are designed by a committee of students and professors, who come from different disciplines. The thematic concerns during 1977-1978 academic year were: "The Individual and Society," fall term, and "Beliefs, Values, and Human Existence," spring term.<sup>2</sup>

Major works used in the fall course were:

Dostoevsky, Feodor. The Grand Inquisitor

Gilkey, Langdon. Shantung Compound

Heilbroner, Robert L. An Inquiry into the Human Prospect

Ibsen, Henrik. A Doll's House

Mayer, Milton. They Thought They were Free: The Germans 1933-45

Milgram, Stanley. Obedience to Authority

Sophocles. Antigone

Warren, Robert Penn. All the King's Men

In the spring term the major works were:

<sup>1</sup>James Cass and Max Birnbaum, Comparative Guide to American Colleges, Eighth ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 131.

<sup>2</sup>"Introduction to Liberal Arts: 1977-78 Student Course Manual," Coe College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Fall, 1977, pp. 1-12.

Brecht, Bertold. Galileo  
 Bryan, C. D. B. Friendly Fire  
 Camus, Albert. The Plague  
 Festinger, Leon, et al. When Prophecy Fails  
 Koestler, Arthur. Darkness at Noon  
 Lucas, George R., and Ogletree, Thomas W., (eds.).  
Lifeboat Ethics  
 Salinger, J. D. Franny and Zooey  
 Voltaire. Candide<sup>3</sup>

In addition to these "major books," students were required to read numerous articles and view many films.

The composition assignments in the ILA program are somewhat of a compromise between highly prescriptive assignments and non-prescriptive writing:

The papers are to be essays dealing with topics related to readings and discussions in class; students are not permitted to write poetry, fiction or prepare some non-literary project (e.g. a piece of art) for these assignments. Instructors may suggest paper topics, but will also give students some freedom to develop their own subject. The papers will be evaluated on the basis of form as well as content (though greater weight will be placed on the latter).<sup>4</sup>

The above directions explain to Coe students the importance of correlating the literature and the composition in the ILA courses.

<sup>3</sup>"Introduction to Liberal Arts," p. 7.

<sup>4</sup>"Introduction to Liberal Arts," p. 5.

There are advantages in offering a program which all freshmen are required to take. Dr. Malcolm Peel, the first director of the program, feels the most significant point is that the "course offers a cross-campus intellectual ferment. The entire freshman class sees the same films, reads the same books, deals with the same issues. The students go back to the dorms and talk about what they have learned."<sup>5</sup> Yet, there are also disadvantages because the courses are required. Student dissatisfaction arises because students feel that standards vary from class to class, and since they all take the same course at the same time, they can make comparisons.

The program has helped to break the "graduate-school mind set" of many professors since the classes are structured to elicit student reaction. Some professors "have to bite their tongues to keep from lecturing."

The courses are presented by professors who may lack expertise in the literature or film which the courses require. This problem is partially mitigated by two factors: the reliance upon the humanistic method of inquiry and Monday afternoon sessions in which the professors who are more knowledgeable in the subject matter hold seminar

<sup>5</sup>Personal interview with Malcolm Peel, 20 June 1978. All further quotations cited from Dr. Peel occurred during this interview.



sessions for the teachers.

While some departments at Coe have not been able to supply enough teachers for the program, there has always been an adequate supply of teachers. The titles of the works suggest that English teachers should be major contributors, and according to Dr. Peel they have been: "The English department, in particular, has been heavily committed. English teachers have taken the lead in helping other teachers analyze and deal with works which may be somewhat foreign to them. The ILA is a 'cup of tea' for the English department."

The most unique characteristic about the ILA program is its use of paraprofessionals or community people. The use of paraprofessionals has been advantageous to the program, the students, and the institution: "These people come from all walks of life; some have Ph.D.'s. They form a liaison between students and faculty. They come to class, take part in discussion and talk with students. Students are generally more willing to discuss their problems with the paraprofessionals than they are with their teachers. Furthermore, the use of community people has strengthened our ties with the Cedar Rapids community." Despite receiving no remuneration for their services, there are so many paraprofessionals who want to work in the program a sabbatical leave policy has been put into effect to alleviate oversupply.

The ILA program is relatively inexpensive. The primary cost of the program comes from the release time of three or four faculty members from three credit courses. Additionally there is a budget of approximately \$2,000 for speakers and performers.

The major strengths of the ILA program appear to be the commitment to the liberal arts concept across faculty departments, and the use of high-quality, interesting material. The thematic approach, along with the inquiry techniques used in teaching the ILA program, are congruous with the humanistic principles of inquiry.

The University of Iowa: Literature, Science and the Arts

The University of Iowa at Iowa City, Iowa, has an approximate enrollment of 22,000. Admission to the College of Liberal Arts is "highly selective."<sup>6</sup> The English department has received wide national acclaim for the Writers Workshop.

There has been a long term commitment by the English department at Iowa for interdisciplinary courses and programs. In addition to a wide listing of individual interdisciplinary courses, there is an American Studies Program and a long standing program called Literature, Science and the Arts (LSA). The LSA program dates back to 1947 and

<sup>6</sup>Cass and Birnbaum, p. 283.

consists of a series of interdisciplinary courses which can be put together with other disciplinary courses to form a major.<sup>7</sup>

Included in the program are the following courses which carry two to four hours of credit:

The Pursuit of Happiness: Treatment of individual happiness in various types of human experience by Aristotle, Freud, Cellini, Montaigne, Voltaire, Boswell, Sartre, etc.

Myth and Reason: Interplay between myth and reason as significant patterns in Western thought: reading from Sophocles, Plato, Milton, Nietzsche, anthropologists, novelists.

The Good Society: Man's life in society and its potentialities as seen in works by Plato, Rabelais, Machiavelli, Shakespeare, Locke, Gibbon, Marx: recent fiction and non-fiction.

Values in the Contemporary World: Modern problems in definition and choice of values, examined through writings of contemporary ethical theorists and novelists.

Human Nature and the Impact of Science: Relationship of scientific to social and humanistic thought. Same as German 13:154.

Form and Milieu in the Arts: Interplay between art forms and other cultural patterns, institutions and rituals, through close examination of creative and theoretical writings, specific works of music and graphic art.

Roots of Modern Culture: Literary and social manifestations of modern Romanticism.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Victor Harris, "The Humanities at the State University of Iowa," in The Humanities in General Education, ed. James A. Fisher (Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown, n.d.), p. 192.

<sup>8</sup>"General Catalog Reprint," The University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, n.d., p. 31.

The major emphasis of the courses is the integration of ideas found in selected literature and developed primarily through discussion. A reading list of works which were required in Roots of Modern Culture, summer, 1978, includes:

Freud. Future of an Illusion

Buber. I and Thou

Jacques Monod. Chance and Necessity

Werner Heisenberg. Physics and Philosophy

Witold Gomborwicz. Pornografia

Terence des Pres. The Survivor!

A. Solzhenitsyn. One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch

John Hersey. Hiroshima

Kurt Vonnegut. Slaughter-House Five

D. H. Lawrence. Lady Chatterley's Lover

Stanislaw Lem. Solaris

Simone Weil. The Need for Roots

Frantz Fanon. The Wretched of the Earth<sup>9</sup>

The prime movers of the LSA program are the English department and the director of the program, English professor Dr. Donald Marshall. The English department releases Dr. Marshall from teaching two three-credit English courses in

<sup>9</sup>"Literature, Science and the Arts: Summer Term 1978," The University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, n.d., n.p. (Mimeographed).

order to teach one three-credit humanities course and to administer the program. The entire cost of the program, approximately \$10,000, is borne by the English department. The teachers from other departments who teach in the team-taught classes receive no pay for their services. Dr. Marshall believes teachers volunteer to teach in the Iowa program because "they feel compelled to." Further, they are "committed and excited."<sup>10</sup>

Dr. Marshall, with a strong disciplinary background in literature, is committed to interdisciplinarity. He feels that colleges have abandoned the liberal arts and "turned them into disciplines" because the seclusion of the disciplines offers safety for students and teachers.

Not all students are able to deal with interdisciplinary humanities in Dr. Marshall's view. Though he is certain that interdisciplinary courses tend to be more difficult for students, he feels that they should not be restricted to honor students. Dr. Marshall prefers the inquiry approach even though "it is more difficult than adding layers of material." Dr. Marshall asserts that when the inquiry method is applied to questions "which have to be asked, the student is able to comprehend interrelationships." When this occurs, education is excitingly close to what it should be.

<sup>10</sup>Personal interview with Donald Marshall, 5 July 1978. All further quotations cited from Dr. Marshall occurred during this interview.

Teachers in the program find themselves "out on a limb" at times. Dr. Marshall feels that there are times when "it's good for students to see an historian wrestling with a difficult novel." In discussing the characteristics which are needed by a teacher to be an effective interdisciplinary teacher, Dr. Marshall said:

First off he is probably something of a maverick. Interdisciplinary programs must place emphasis upon people. Teachers of these programs must have a roving curiosity. Also they must be concerned with teaching values. Competent people can be trained to teach most disciplines, but interdisciplinary teaching is different--it is a frame of mind. The ideal teacher should be tenured, probably an associate professor, who has mastered his discipline. He, also, likes to probe and has probably become restive.

While Dr. Marshall is committed to interdisciplinarity and regards it as an imperative part of the college curriculum, he is quite certain that it is too demanding for some students, and, if overused, would be too frustrating for both students and teachers. The unwillingness of some teachers to consider interdisciplinarity and the non-career nature of the humanities tends to dispel the likelihood of an overabundance of interdisciplinary programs.

The LSA program at Iowa illustrates the power which situation value judgments can have upon faculty members. The demands of responding to hard questions which may be only obliquely related to one's mastered discipline is not a challenge which will appeal to everyone. It does, however,

intrigue a sufficient number of faculty members at Iowa to keep a thirty-year-old program moving optimistically forward.

### Grinnell: The Humanities

Grinnell College, located at Grinnell, Iowa, enjoys a reputation for academic excellence. The approximate 1,200 students in the undergraduate institution come from a widely distributed area of America.<sup>11</sup> Grinnell maintains a liberal arts tradition with a low student-teacher ratio.

Grinnell offers a wide range of interdisciplinary courses including American Studies courses which may lead to a major and humanities courses which may be taken to constitute an independent major. The English department supplies teachers for both programs, and an English professor, Charles Cleaver, is the present chairman of the American Studies program.

In 1958 two humanities courses were created as requirements for graduation. Grinnell students took the four credit courses during the freshman year. A description of the courses which have remained essentially the same for twenty years follows:

101 Humanities I: The Ancient World  
Deals with the beginning of Western civilization in ancient Greece from Homeric times through the Peloponnesian War. The readings constitute a

<sup>11</sup>Cass and Birnbaum, p. 234.

foundation for further study in the liberal arts. They include epic poetry; the tragic drama of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; the Poetics of Aristotle; Plato's Symposium, Apology, and Crito; and Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War. The course develops habits of critical reading in philosophical and historical as well as literary texts. Students write several short essays, which encourage rigorous and imaginative thinking about the issues--literary, historical, and philosophical--presented in the readings.

102 Humanities II: The Middle Ages to the Modern World

Deals with major works of Western civilization from the Middle Ages to the 20th Century. Readings include works by such authors as Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Flaubert, and Mann. This course, like Humanities 101, develops habits of critical reading and, by requiring students to write several short essays, encourages vigorous and imaginative thinking about the issues presented in the readings.<sup>12</sup>

In 1970 the courses were changed from required to elective. The recruitment of more than twenty faculty members, some of whom came from outside the humanities division, was difficult. Morris Parslow, chairman of the humanities division, suggests a major reason for the change of status from required to elective resulted from "uneven commitment" to the program by some teachers who would rather avoid teaching a required course.<sup>13</sup> Also, many institutions were dropping

<sup>12</sup>Grinnell College Catalog: 1977-1978, Grinnell College, Grinnell, Iowa, 1977, p. 53.

<sup>13</sup>Personal interview with Morris Parslow, 4 August 1978. All further quotations cited from Dr. Parslow occurred during this interview.



required courses. The dropping of the requirement for the courses moved Grinnell students away from the integrating forces which the courses helped to develop.

The faculty and administration at Grinnell felt strongly that there should be a required program which would modify the academic approach which the humanities courses used. From this conviction a freshman tutorial program has emerged. The purpose of the program clearly is partly, if not essentially, advisory:

Every freshman at Grinnell enrolls in a freshman tutorial, a small group of students working with a faculty member to study a subject of interest to students and tutor alike. The tutor is also the academic adviser for each student in the group; teaching and learning are closely linked with the planning of programs of study. The tutor in teaching discovers the aptitudes and interests of the student, who in turn receives academic advice, not from an infrequently consulted stranger, but from a teacher who sees the student from week to week.<sup>14</sup>

The humanities courses are designed to "acquaint students with what people have thought and done individually and socially in the past and with the means by which they have expressed their ideas and emotions."<sup>15</sup> The four-credit tutorials are not necessarily past-oriented. Further, they are inquiry rather than content centered. The objectives

<sup>14</sup>Grinnell College Catalog, p. 37.

<sup>15</sup>Grinnell College Catalog, p. 53.

of the tutorial program follow: "The objectives of tutorial work are to illuminate methods of inquiry rather than to master disciplinary material, to give special attention to writing and to critical analysis of texts, and to provide initial preparation in techniques of research."<sup>16</sup>

Some tutorials, which are individually constructed and are not related to other tutorials, have promising interdisciplinary titles. The following tutorials, which hold such promise, were offered during the 1977-1978 academic year:

Four Problems of Man (Biology).

Technology and the Arts (Theatre).

The Hero in Early Western European Literature  
(English).

Plants, Man, and Survival (Biology).

Roots, Literally or Figuratively (Biology).

Technology in Literature (German).

Plato's Republic and Ours (French).

The Computer: Threat to Society? (Mathematics).<sup>17</sup>

There is a conviction within the humanities division that the two humanities courses can survive as electives. The 101 Humanities course, indeed, has survived quite well and attracts four or five sections each year. The 102 Humanities course is much less popular and is practically

<sup>16</sup> Grinnell College Catalog, p. 51.

<sup>17</sup> Grinnell College Catalog, p. 52.

"vestigial." Humanities teachers who are committed to the courses and who would like to offer them to a broader audience plan to alter the subject matter and offer them as tutorials.

Grinnell offers five interdisciplinary courses which are team-taught to upper division students. The courses allow students to receive credit in the humanities or social studies. The courses are designed primarily to elicit discussion from small groups of students, usually ten to fifteen. There are teachers from two different disciplines who direct the courses. The courses tend to have unifying themes; yet the "text is the important element." The courses were originally designed to carry eight credits but have been altered to carry four credits because of a feeling that some students did not wish to devote such a large portion of a semester to the courses. The following course descriptions, along with the departments which provide teachers, illustrate the interdisciplinary nature of the program at Grinnell:

140 Medieval and Renaissance Culture: 1100-1650  
Follows important themes through three "moments" of European development (High Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Early Modern) by careful examination of their literature and art and by using contemporary documents. Papers based on readings.  
(History) (English) (Political Science) (Art)

244 The Age of Scientific Revolution: 1620-1720  
A study of major works of philosophy, science, poetry, drama, and political theory from the 1620's to the 1720's. The reading list brings together material usually taught in different

departments such as Milton's Paradise Lost, Descartes' Discourse on Method, Newton's Principia, Racine's Phaedra, and Locke's Of Civil Government. (Physics) (English) (French) (History)

246 The Enlightenment: 1680-1800

A study of scientific, literary, and philosophical masterpieces of 18th-century Europe. The reading list like the century it represents is diverse, including such writings as Fielding's Joseph Andrews, Montesquieu's Spirit of the Laws, Rousseau's Confessions, Lavoisier's Treatise on Chemistry, and Hume's Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding. (Physics) (English) (French) (History)

247 Industrialism and Imperialism: The 19th Century

A study of significant writings in various fields, from the late 18th to the early 20th century, constituting the shaping of and critical reaction to both modern industrial society and the imperialist experience of Europe and America. The reading includes works, usually taught in different departments, by such writers as Smith, Malthus, Marx, and Veblen; Carlyle, Mill, Ruskin, and Morris; Dickens, Zola, Shaw, and Conrad. (English) (Anthropology) (Economics) (History)

249 Progress and Primitivism: The 19th Century  
A study of two contending reactions to the fact of drastic change that dominate the thought and art of the 19th century: the faith in progress and the idealization of the chronologically prior or the culturally simpler. The reading includes works, usually taught in different departments, by such writers as Emerson, deTocqueville, and Twain; Darwin, Nietzsche, and Freud; Goethe, Conrad, and Mann. (English) (Anthropology) (Economics) (History).<sup>18</sup>

The subject matter in the interdisciplinary program at Grinnell tends to focus upon the distant past. The rationale behind this focus is due in part to Dr. Parslow's

<sup>18</sup>Grinnell College Catalog, p. 54.

conviction that the "value of texts is determined by the judgment of time." Dr. Parslow feels that the use of twentieth century texts in the humanities would be too speculative. Dr. Parslow makes his veneration for more ancient literature clear by saying: "If you want to know what is great, go back to Homer and move cautiously forward."

The dropping of the two required, past-oriented humanities courses for the more narrow often present-oriented tutorials, the changing from eight credits to four credits of the remaining five humanities courses may suggest a tenuous future. There seems to be at Grinnell, however, a strong commitment to the interdisciplinary programs. The moving away from the lecture method of teaching, and the working together of faculty and students is, in Dr. Parslow's view, an imperative which is too important to let die. He believes that through better advising and persuasion the programs will grow.

#### Buena Vista College: Freshman Tutorials (a proposal)

Buena Vista College, located in Storm Lake, Iowa, enrolls approximately nine hundred students. The college's admissions policy permits nearly all applicants to be accepted.<sup>19</sup> The college is expanding and has recently opened attendance centers at Council Bluffs and Fort Dodge.

During the 1977-1978 academic year, the academic dean

<sup>19</sup>Cass and Birnbaum, p. 73.

of Buena Vista, Dr. Fred Brown, proposed a program which would require all entering freshmen to complete a tutorial. The proposal focuses sharply upon the need to counsel freshmen students, to orient freshmen toward academic programs and to improve communication skills. The goals in the proposal follow:

1. Create an atmosphere of liberal arts learning as part of the freshmen orientation to the College [sic].
2. Create a sense of freshmen unity and importance to assist in the transition to College [sic].
3. Improve freshmen advising and counseling.
4. Improve the Cultural Affairs Program.
5. Improve retention of freshmen.
6. Stimulate campus-wide discussion centered on a common theme.
7. Improve reading, writing, discussion skills, and library usage.
8. Improve the connections between student activities and the freshmen academic experience, especially in orienting the freshmen to the academic life.<sup>20</sup>

The details of the program speak to the need to coordinate college convocations and to provide a means to stimulate cross-campus activities. The format for the integrated tutorials points to the interdisciplinary nature of the

<sup>20</sup>"Freshmen Tutorials: A Unique Program for the Freshmen Class at Buena Vista College," Buena Vista College, Storm Lake, Iowa, n.d., n.p. (Mimeographed).

program:

1. All freshmen will be enrolled in a freshman seminar or tutorial for the fall term.
2. All freshmen will be required to attend four major convocations, one per month for the fall term.
3. To cover the freshman class, 15 tutorials with approximately 15 students each will be offered taught by 15 faculty.
4. Faculty tutors will also advise the freshmen students in their tutorial. Additional major field advising will be done by faculty in that major field, especially for preparing the proper course schedules.
5. A theme will be selected for the term and each tutorial will link into the theme.
6. The convocations will tie into the theme and be supported as part of the Cultural Affairs Program.
7. The tutorials will carry three hours credit, but meet two hours per week. Assignments will include readings, writing, discussion and special projects.
8. Student Affairs will coordinate freshmen orientation and other activities with the freshman tutorial program.
9. Fifteen faculty will be chosen by the Dean of the Faculty to teach the tutorial and will serve as the Advisory Committee for the program. That group will establish the format, the theme and the convocation speakers or presentations.
10. Details regarding faculty load and scheduling will be developed if the Faculty Senate believes that the basic idea is sound and of high priority to the College.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup>"Freshmen Tutorials," n.p.

Dr. Carl Adkins, a professor of English, worked closely with Dr. Brown in the preparation of the proposal. The emphasis upon the need to improve student communication skills through a college-wide program is exemplary. Dr. Brown makes clear the interest which the English department has in the program stems in part from the dissatisfaction of "being the scapegoat for students who can't write."<sup>22</sup>

The faculty approved the proposed program unanimously. The program cannot begin before the 1979-1980 academic year because of faculty commitments to courses and programs. Before the program begins, some important decisions will have to be made. Dr. Brown believes that if the program is to operate at the highest level of potential, the college should provide time during the summer to develop the courses. Also, he believes there should be a director, a teacher with some release time. Furthermore, the library needs to be expanded to support the program. Some hard financial decisions will have to be made. Dr. Brown estimates the cost "on the low side would be around \$10,000 to pay for the overload of the fifteen teachers at \$600 and to cover expenses of speakers. On the high side the cost could be as much as \$40,000." Yet, as Dr. Brown asserts, the costs are difficult to figure, for "if the program excites three or

<sup>22</sup>Personal interview with Fred Brown, 6 July 1978. All further quotations cited from Dr. Brown occurred during this interview.



four students each year who might drop out, the program could be self-supporting."

Although no specific course proposals have been made, the faculty has discussed the interdisciplinary nature of the courses. There is consensus that an effective liberal arts curriculum must be presented in interdisciplinary format. The definition which Dr. Brown gives to the liberal arts tends to be close to the concepts which modern humanists use in defining the humanities. Dr. Brown holds that the following elements of the liberal arts are essential today.

The approach is holistic and humanistic. Furthermore, the approach should stress the historical context. Next the liberal arts should emphasize both critical analysis and emotional reactions. Further the liberal arts should emphasize creativity and recreation. Also, there should be a sharp focus upon values. The liberal arts are extremely important; they need to be emphasized.

Perhaps the most interesting assertion in Brown's definition is his conviction that the "approach should stress the historical context." The liberal arts emphasis in the Buena Vista proposal fits well in an interdisciplinary framework.

The proposal suggests a stronger emphasis in the affective domain than it does in the academic domain. In fact "the essential point is that students should not be overwhelmed with subject matter." The small classes could

well create a climate for the intellectual awakening of students, and if this were the only goal which could be achieved, the tutorials could be considered to be worthwhile.

Ottumwa Heights College: Humanities Program

Ottumwa Heights College, located in Ottumwa, Iowa, is a small, two-year, private institution which enrolls approximately four hundred students. The college is currently developing programs with Indian Hills Community College which has increased the student count to over five hundred and further expansion is expected. The college admits nearly all applicants.

In 1968 Ottumwa Heights initiated a two-course humanities sequence which in part was created to replace a six credit sequence of two freshmen English courses. The humanities courses carry ten credits, five each semester. The courses are required for both the Associate of Arts and the Associate of Applied Science degrees.

The courses are staffed by four English teachers, an art teacher, a vocal music teacher, and a philosophy-religion teacher. The courses are structured in the following triplex design:

1. Lecture (large group) two hours
2. Discussion (small group) one hour
3. Composition Workshop (small group) two hours

The emphasis in the lecture section is prescriptive; presentations are designed to introduce literature and the fine arts and to suggest possible approaches for students to use in examining them. The discussion and composition sections are designed to elicit student response to the materials in the program.

The works in the courses are broad in terms of genre, time of composition, and nationality. The underlying philosophy which is close to the tradition of the liberal arts follows:

The content of the course is the qualities, feelings, problems and inclinations which we all share as a part of the community of man and which you owe yourself as an individual man. Your teachers hope that we can delineate how the humanities are a mirror which reveal the paradoxes that help us understand the world in which we live and the kind of life we want to lead. We, therefore, struggle with the moral dilemmas such as who am I; why do I act this way; how else can I act, etc. These quandaries are approached in an interdisciplinary manner; we examine works of literature, art and music as aesthetic creations dealing with these problems. We also hope that we demonstrate the fact that while one can live without the humanities, one can live more fully with them. If you have or develop an open mind and a willingness not only to take, but more importantly to receive and to give, then this course can be fascinating as well as valuable. As you can expect, the more effort you put forth the more rewarding and enjoyable will be your experience.<sup>23</sup>

The courses follow the essential design of the

<sup>23</sup>"Humanities 29-101, 102, 1977-1978," Ottumwa Heights College, Ottumwa, Iowa, n.d., n.p. (Mimeographed).

humanities which Louise Dudley and Austin Faricy developed in The Humanities. The design begins with sources in art and literature; moves to mediums of the visual arts and music and literature; considers the organization of music, the visual arts, and literature; and culminates in discussions of style and judgment.

The material used in the courses is more heavily weighted in literature than in the arts. Though the content of the course has varied from year to year, the present format has remained fairly constant for the past five years. The following works used during the 1977-1978 academic year illustrate the potential for inquiry which the course attempts:

Fall 1977

Bolt, Robert. A Man for all Seasons.

Conrad, Joseph. Heart of Darkness and The Secret Sharer.

Dudley, Louise and Austin Faricy. The Humanities.

Melville, Herman. Billy Budd.

Perrin and Corder. Handbook of Current English.

Plato. The Last Days of Socrates.

Shakespeare, William. Romeo and Juliet.

The Bible.

Spring 1978

Clemens, Samuel Langhorne. Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.

Dubos, Rene. So Human an Animal.

Dudley, L. and A. Faricy. The Humanities.

Eiseley, Loren. The Immense Journey.

Ghiselin, Brewster (ed.). The Creative Process: A Symposium.

Lester, James. Writing Research Papers.

Perrin and Corder. Handbook of Current English.

Shaw, G. B. Pygmalion.

The Bible.<sup>24</sup>

The two-part sequence is relatively inexpensive to operate, costing approximately \$2,000 to cover the release time of the director, Dr. John Skonnard. Dr. Skonnard serves as moderator for weekly team meetings which are designed to be forums for discussion about the program.

Because the humanities at Ottumwa Heights have three relatively distinct parts, students tend to feel less certain about their progress in the total program. Since students have different teachers for the three divisions of the courses, more difficult and complex relationships tend to develop than in single-teacher courses. Dr. Bernadine Pieper, president of the college, believes the program structure is somewhat confusing and complicated.<sup>25</sup> The average grades given in the spring 1978 semester tend to point to the

<sup>24</sup>"Humanities 29-101, 102," n.p.

<sup>25</sup>Personal interview with Bernadine Pieper, 7 August 1978.

difficulty. An average grade point of 1.81 given to the 190 students was approximately one-half grade below the average of the same students in their other classes.<sup>26</sup> The combined courses demand eight to ten prescriptive papers which require students to integrate what may seem to them to be disparate ideas. Sixty-six percent of the students at Ottumwa Heights regard the workload of the Humanities sequence more difficult than their other courses.<sup>27</sup> The difficulty of the courses seems rooted in the attempt which they make to integrate literature with the writing assignments.

The one-hour forum for discussion, with the classes limited to fifteen students, offers excellent opportunities for freshmen students to grow intellectually. The two-hour writing section, which also limits class size to fifteen, emphasizes expository and argumentative writing, which is reproduced and discussed in the classes. Student ratings consistently show that these sections are regarded by students as the heart of the program. Perhaps the prescriptive nature of the lectures, groups of seventy to eighty, works against their potential success. Perhaps the two-hour sections are too long.

<sup>26</sup>"Report on the Humanities," Ottumwa Heights College, Ottumwa, Iowa, n.d., n.p. (Mimeographed).

<sup>27</sup>"The Humanities Evaluation Report," Ottumwa Heights College, Ottumwa, Iowa, n.d., n.p. (Mimeographed).

The humanities teachers at Ottumwa Heights College will reassess the program again this year. There appears a strong likelihood that the program will continue without major changes. The English department is committed to teaching freshmen composition, and Dr. Skonnard believes "the humanities is the best framework for teaching writing. The issues which derive from the sources concern us all; it is imperative that students talk and write about them."<sup>28</sup> The humanities courses appear to be a long term institutional commitment at Ottumwa Heights.

The personal interviews concerning interdisciplinary programs, conducted on the five Iowa campuses, proved to be both interesting and enlightening. Given that literature and composition are both interdisciplinary in content, there is little wonder that many English teachers and departments are interested in interdisciplinary programs. The following attitudes considering interdisciplinary programs emerged most frequently as important considerations in the five institutions:

1. The content in interdisciplinary humanities should come essentially from literature.
2. The primary purpose in interdisciplinary humanities should be the integration of ideas and knowledge rather than the mastery of isolated facts.

<sup>28</sup>Personal interview with John Skonnard, 6 May 1978.

3. The emphasis in interdisciplinary humanities should be upon the student. Programs tend to emphasize discussion first and composition second.
4. The best way to organize material is by theme or question.
5. Interdisciplinarity may be achieved by team teaching or by a single teacher.
6. Team teaching is an exciting variation from traditional teaching. It demands more from students and teachers and is more expensive than traditional programs.
7. The major movers in interdisciplinary humanities programs are English teachers.
8. The inquiry approach to the humanities is the most effective way to present the humanities.
9. The primary reasons used in selecting literature are its applicability to a thematic idea and its capability of generating interest.
10. The primary threat to interdisciplinary humanities is financial retrenchment.

### A Survey

A survey of Iowa college and university academic deans or liberal arts deans and English chairpersons was conducted during April and May of 1978. Since interdisciplinarity requires administrative commitment, there was an essential need to include in the survey an administrative officer of the institutions. English chairpersons were selected because they function as a liaison between the English faculty and the administration. Moreover, in many small colleges, especially in the junior colleges, the chairperson may be the only full-time English teacher.



Two student groups were selected for the survey--with their combined reactions tabulated. The first group which responded in May of 1978 was a senior group of fifteen English majors who were students in a methods class for English majors at the University of Northern Iowa. The second group in the survey came from a graduate writing institute held during the summer of 1978 at the University of Iowa. The students in the Iowa Institute were public school teachers all of whom came from different school districts to the federally supported institute. While the thrust of the institute focused upon writing, the students considered themselves to be English teachers rather than writing teachers. The undergraduate and graduate backgrounds of the students were geographically widely spread. Since many questions in the survey elicit attitudes about English departments which could best be answered by students with the broadest possible knowledge about English departments, the student sample was limited to advanced students with strong English backgrounds. The two student groups responded to the statements with consistent similarity.

The institutions surveyed include 29 four-year private and public colleges and universities, twelve area community colleges which have arts and science programs, and five private junior colleges: all colleges and universities in Iowa which have North Central regional accreditation. There were 32 English chairpersons who responded to the survey for

a 70 percent return. There were 30 deans who responded for a 65 percent return.

Five statements in the survey are borrowed from summaries of ADE conferences. Statements 1, 2, 7, and 15 are paraphrased from the "Northwestern ADE Seminar: Toward a Definition of Literacy in the Seventies." Statement 5 is paraphrased from the "Tampa Workshop Reports."<sup>29</sup> The statements used in the survey are intended to clarify attitudes about how college English should be presented.

The first 15 survey statements elicited attitudinal responses ranging from 5 (agree) to 1 (disagree). The 5 and 4 responses are grouped as "agree" responses. The 2 and 1 responses are grouped as "disagree" responses. The 3 response which tends to reflect a neutral stance is labeled "impartial." A final column labeled "no response" indicates those who failed to respond. In survey statements 16-19, responses are ranked by the preferences of each group which is determined by the mean. The groups are labeled the following way:

Group 1----- English Chairpersons  
Group 2----- College Deans  
Group 3----- Students

<sup>29</sup>Prospects for the 70's, pp. 199-206.

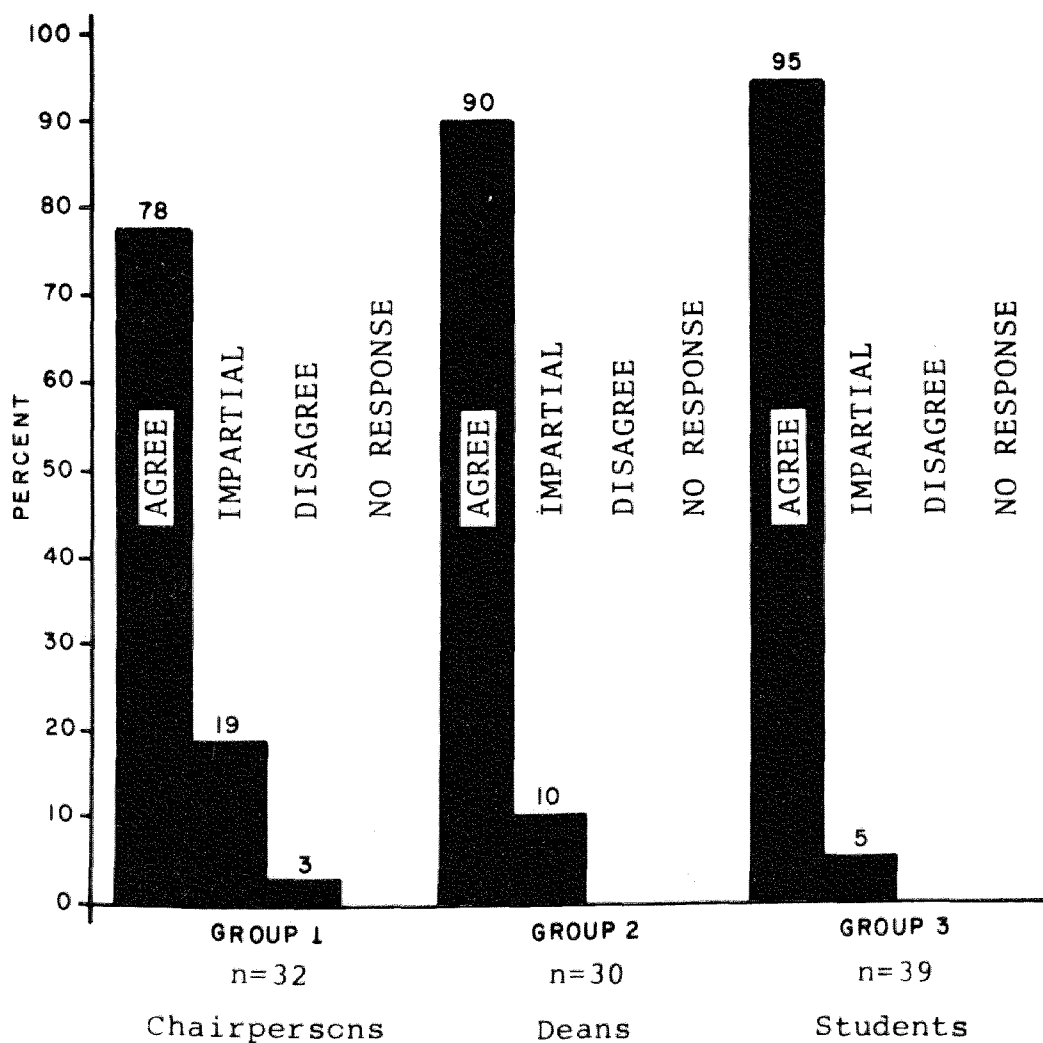
Among the three groups there is consistent approval concerning the notion that English departments should plan curriculum from a broad concept. Nearly one-fifth of the English chairpersons show impartiality to the idea which illustrates greater uncertainty about planning curriculum from a broad concept than is noted in the other groups.

Three respondents added comments about the statement. One administrator, who indicated strong agreement with the statement, added that "composition should be a strong requirement." Another administrator expressed the fear that a broad concept might lead the English department to teach "sociology."

Figure 1

A Comparison of College English Chairpersons, Academic Deans, and College English Majors (Students) Concerning Whether English Departments Should Plan Curriculum from a Broad Concept Rather than a Narrow One

	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>	<u>Group 3</u>
<u>Agree</u>	(25) 78%	(27) 90%	(37) 95%
<u>Impartial</u>	(6) 19%	(3) 10%	(2) 5%
<u>Disagree</u>	(1) 3%		
<u>No Response</u>			



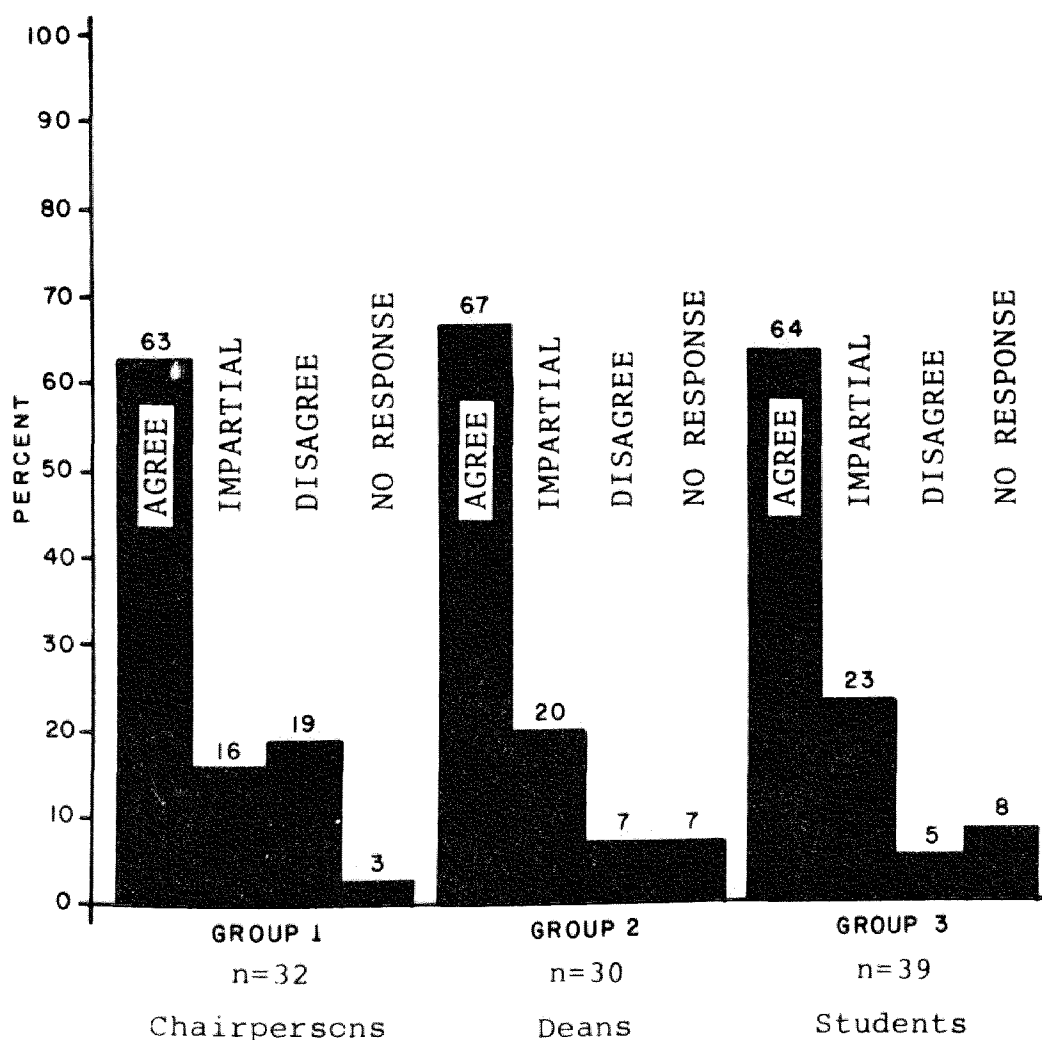
Approximately two-thirds of the three groups agreed with the idea that "English departments should be more responsive for preparing students to cope with the real world."

Sixteen respondents added comments. One chairperson noted that the idea is "a false distinction which we need to rid ourselves of." This comment is similar to attitudes expressed by five other chairpersons. One academic dean noted that preparing English majors is not "vocationalism" and added that "a liberal education... equips them to be flexible and to cope with the real world."

Figure 2

A Comparison of College English Chairpersons, Academic Deans, and College English Majors (Students) Concerning Whether English Departments Should be more Responsive for Preparing Students to Cope with the Real World

	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>	<u>Group 3</u>
<u>Agree</u>	(20) 63%	(20) 67%	(25) 64%
<u>Impartial</u>	(5) 16%	(6) 20%	(9) 23%
<u>Disagree</u>	(6) 19%	(2) 7%	(2) 5%
<u>No Response</u>	(1) 3%	(2) 7%	(3) 8%



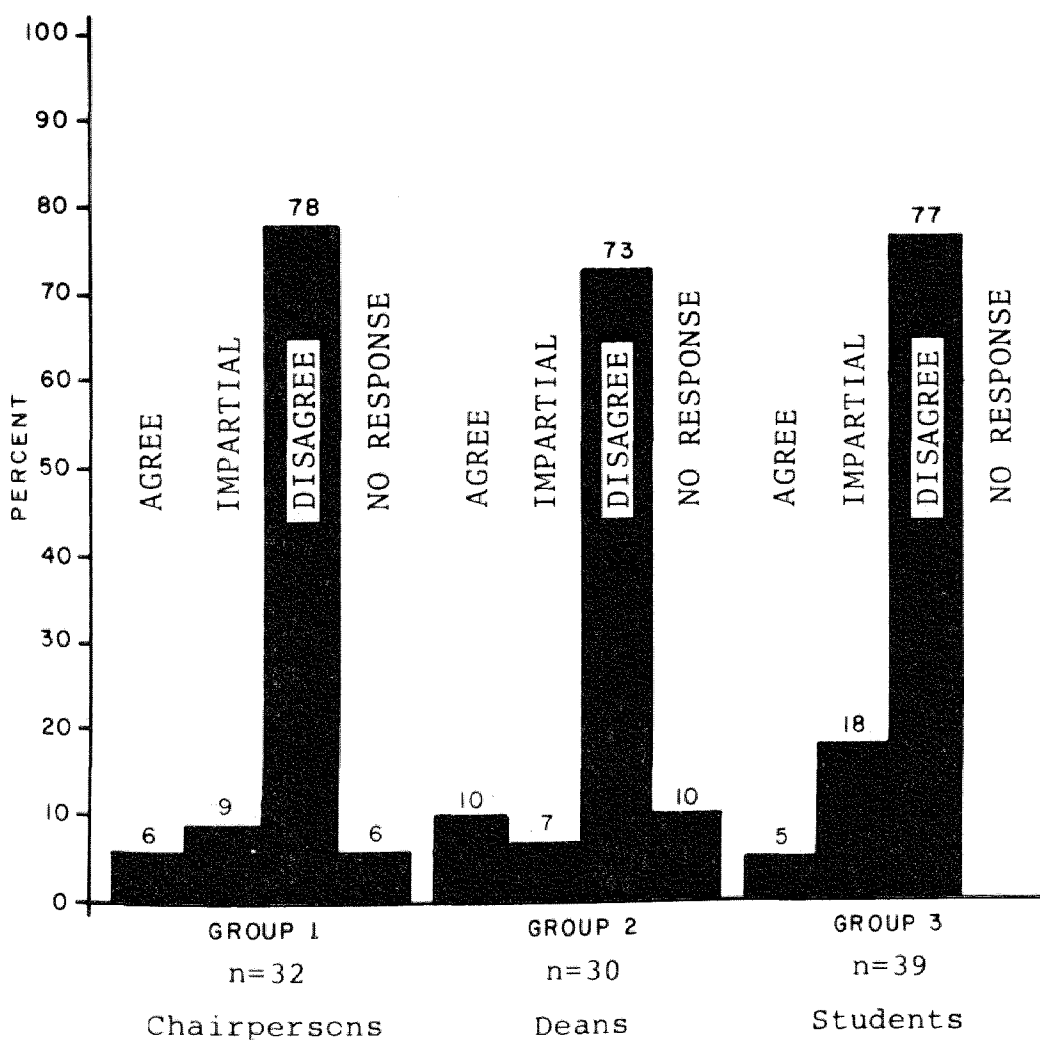
A substantial majority of each group disagreed with the idea that staffing for interdisciplinary courses planned by English departments should come entirely from within the English departments.

Eight comments were added including one from a chairperson who strongly disagreed and concluded that exclusive "staffing would ruin the whole idea." Another chairperson added that if the courses are "developed primarily by the English department, they should be staffed primarily, not exclusively by the English department." One administrator added that "content and delivery should be jointly planned."

Figure 3

A Comparison of College English Chairpersons, Academic Deans, and College English Majors (Students) Concerning Whether Interdisciplinary Courses which are Developed Primarily by English Departments should be Staffed Entirely from within the English Department

	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>	<u>Group 3</u>
<u>Agree</u>	(2) 6%	(3) 10%	(2) 5%
<u>Impartial</u>	(3) 9%	(2) 7%	(7) 18%
<u>Disagree</u>	(25) 78%	(22) 73%	(30) 77%
<u>No Response</u>	(2) 6%	(3) 10%	





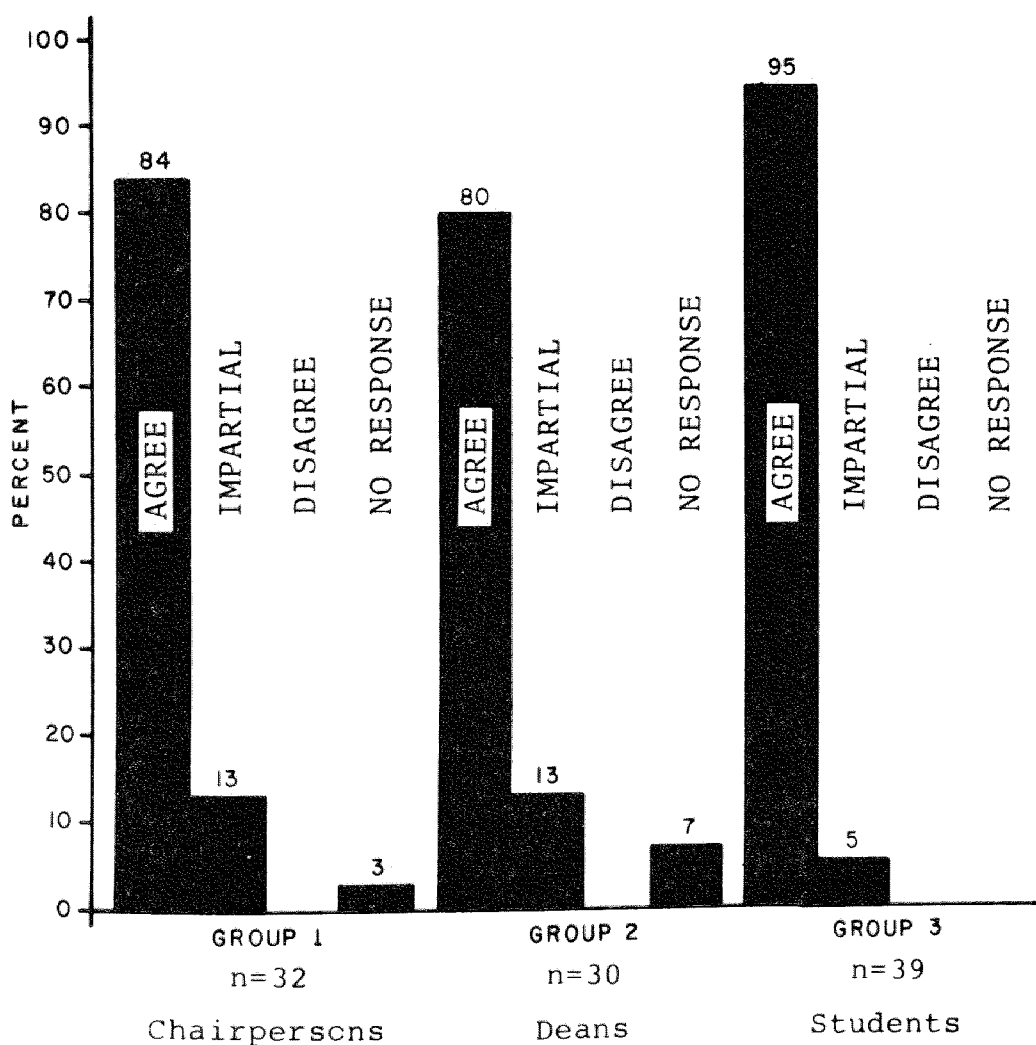
A large majority of respondents from the three groups agree with the idea that English teachers who wish to develop interdisciplinary courses should be encouraged to do so. Not one person disagreed with the idea.

Only three respondents added comments. A student suggested that "anyone should be encouraged to develop new courses." One English chairperson admitting his antipathy to interdisciplinary courses added that "My main complaint concerning this type of course is that it can too easily be a watered-down course without enough scholasticism [sic]." Another chairperson strongly agreed with the idea of teachers developing courses but added that "some people would really mess up the idea."

Figure 4

A Comparison of College English Chairpersons, Academic Deans,  
and College English Majors (Students) Concerning Whether  
English Faculty Members who wish to Develop  
Interdisciplinary Courses Should be  
Encouraged

	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>	<u>Group 3</u>
<u>Agree</u>	(27) 84%	(24) 80%	(37) 95%
<u>Impartial</u>	(4) 13%	(4) 13%	(2) 5%
<u>Disagree</u>			
<u>No Response</u>	(1) 3%	(2) 7%	



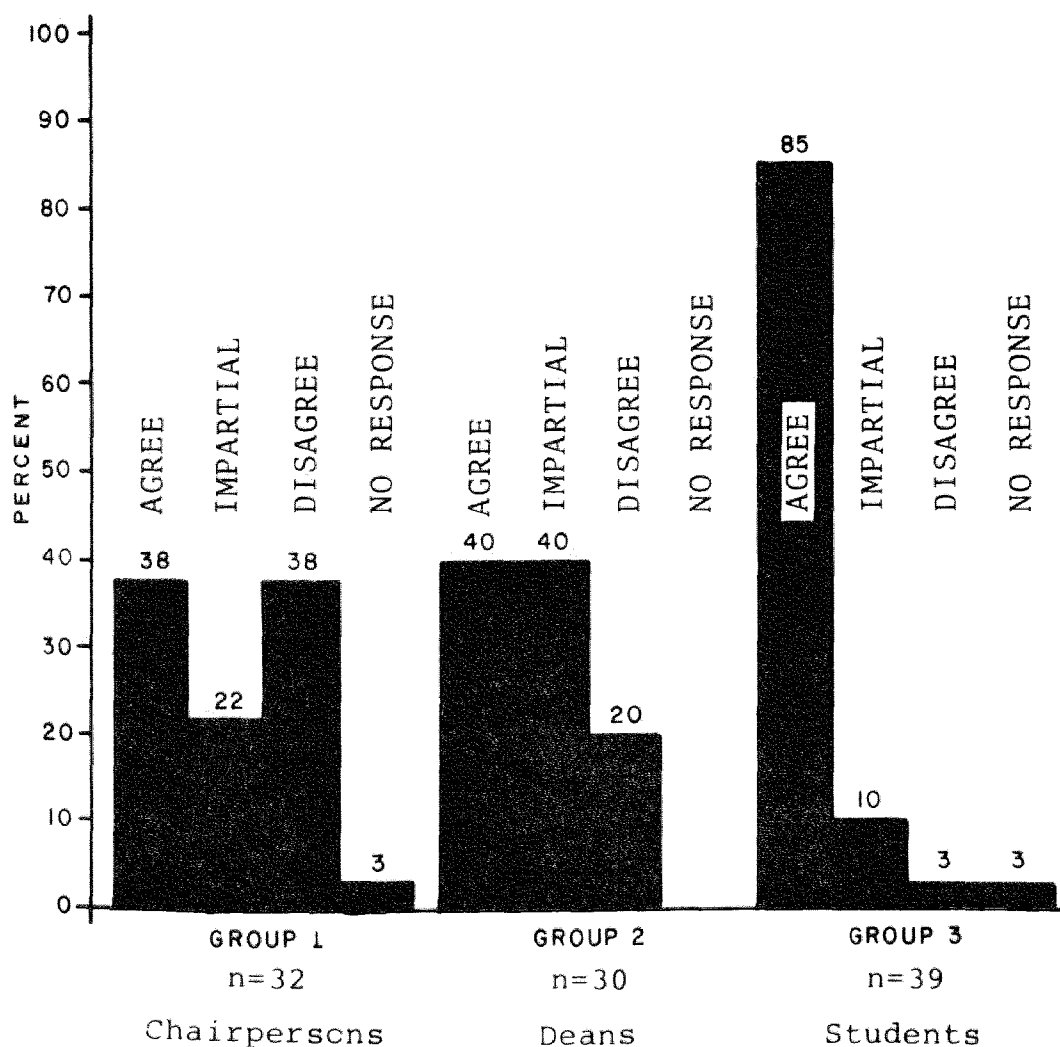
There is a wide disparity among the three groups concerning whether English departments focus too exclusively upon literature. Approximately two-fifths of the chairpersons and administrators feel that English departments focus too exclusively upon literature. The student group, however, overwhelmingly believes that literature receives too much attention.

Eight respondents added comments. One student feels that "there is an imbalance" in English programs which favors literature. Another argues for more courses in "speech, writing, and grammar." An English chairperson agrees there is too much emphasis upon literature and argues for more emphasis upon film and composition. Another chairperson adamantly states that there is "no doubt about" the overemphasis upon literature. This response guesses that at least three-fourths of all English professors "believe that liter - a - ture is pretty holy." The college administrators express considerable uncertainty about the assertion that literature receives too much departmental focus.

Figure 5

A Comparison of College English Chairpersons, Academic Deans,  
and College English Majors (Students) Concerning Whether  
English Departments Focus too Exclusively  
upon Literature

	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>	<u>Group 3</u>
<u>Agree</u>	(12) 38%	(12) 40%	(33) 85%
<u>Impartial</u>	(7) 22%	(12) 40%	(4) 10%
<u>Disagree</u>	(12) 38%	(6) 20%	(1) 3%
<u>No Response</u>	(1) 3%		(1) 3%



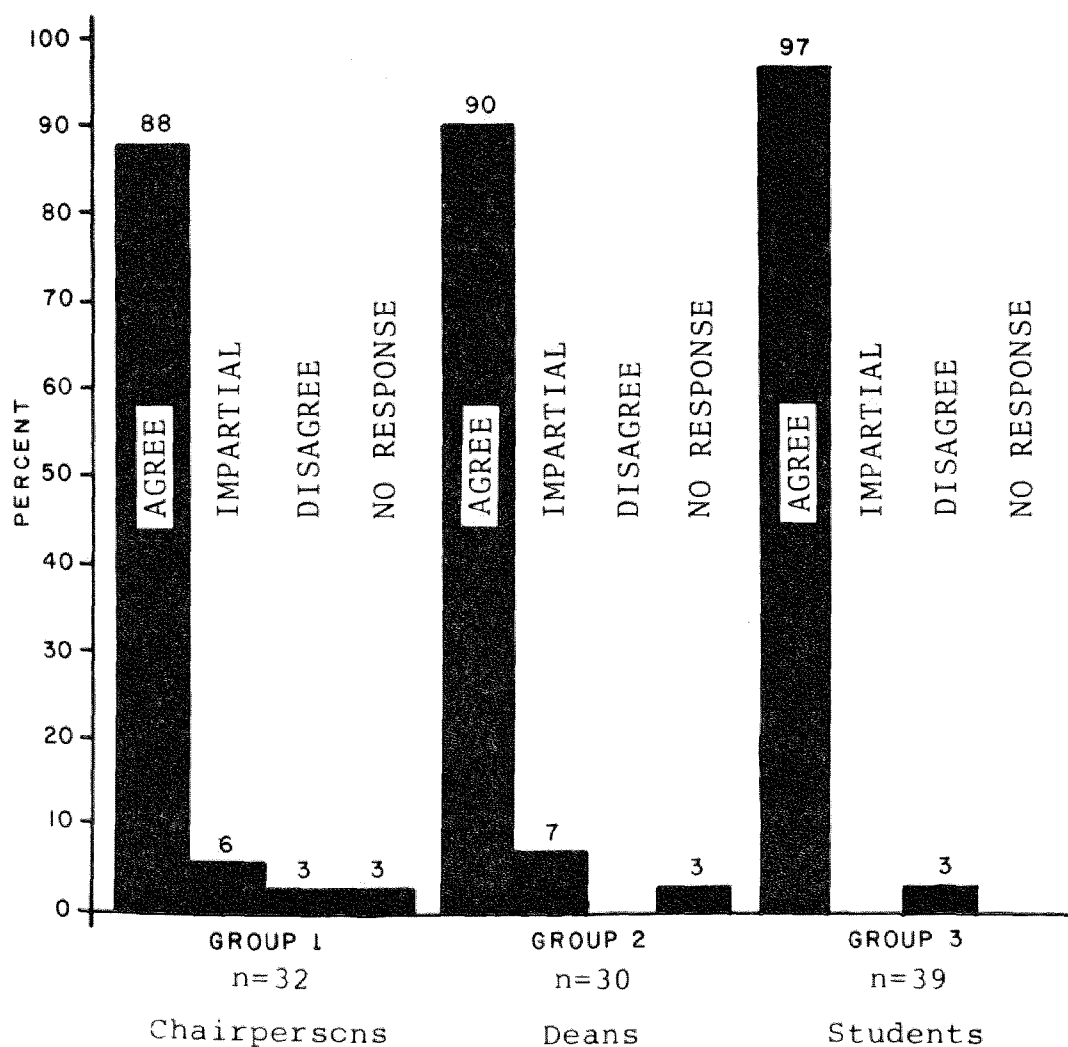
A highly substantial majority of the three groups support the idea that student writing assignments are more effective when they develop from a variety of sources and experiences. Only two respondents in the entire survey disagreed.

Only three persons commented about the survey question. A chairperson suggested that the idea of developing writing assignments from a variety of sources and experiences is "too obvious to need saying." Yet, to another chairperson the phrase "variety of sources and experiences" was underlined with the expression "Don't understand" written in the margin.

Figure 6

A Comparison of College English Chairpersons, Academic Deans,  
and College English Majors (Students) Concerning Whether  
Student Writing Assignments are more Effective when  
They Develop from a Variety of Sources  
and Experiences

	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>	<u>Group 3</u>
<u>Agree</u>	(28) 88%	(27) 90%	(38) 97%
<u>Impartial</u>	(2) 6%	(2) 7%	
<u>Disagree</u>	(1) 3%		(1) 3%
<u>No Response</u>	(1) 3%	(1) 3%	



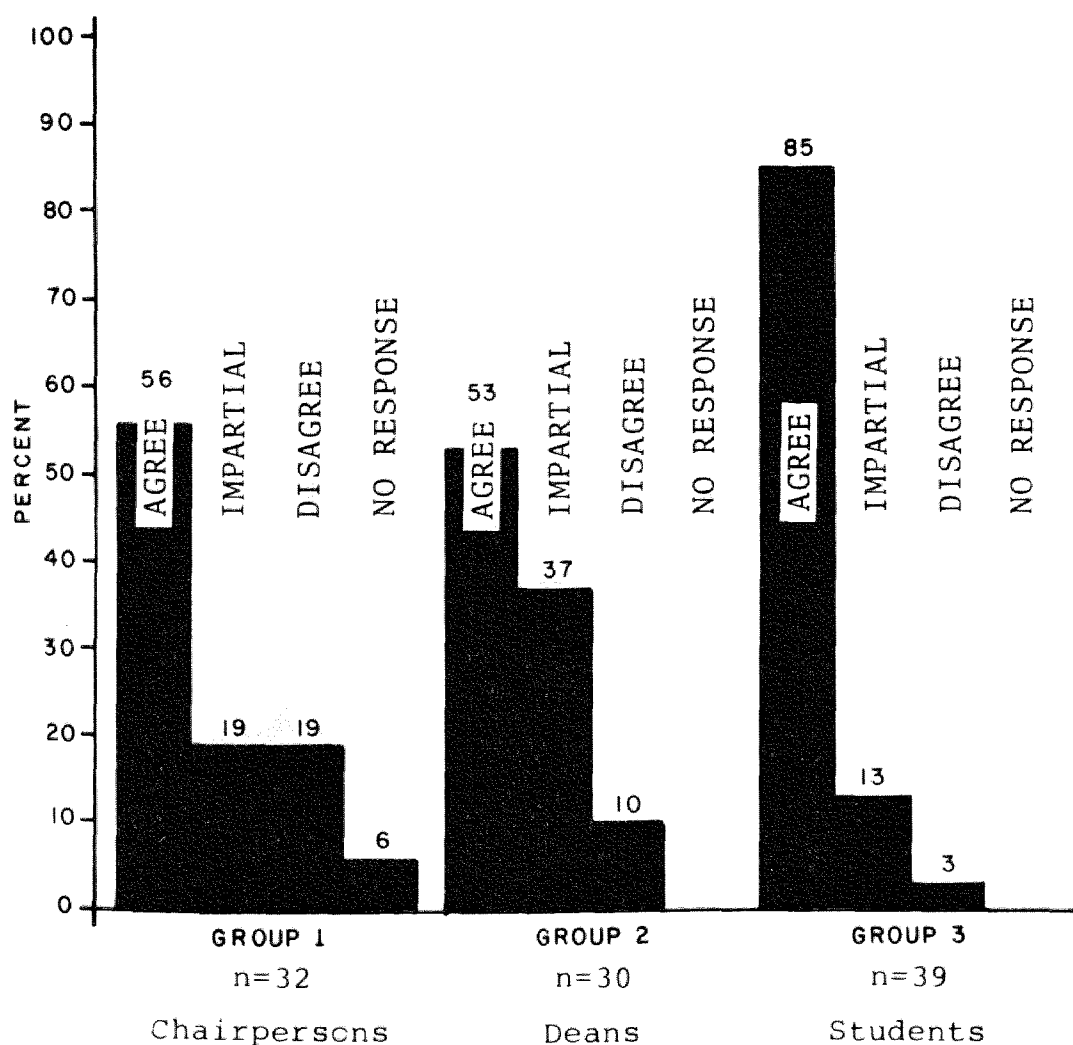
Slightly over one-half of the responding chairpersons and administrators agree with the notion that an interdisciplinary course would be an effective way to integrate electives. A substantial majority of the students, on the other hand, agree with the idea. Eight English chairpersons, or approximately one-fifth of the total respondents in that group, disagree with the idea.

Eleven respondents added comments which are mostly favorable. A chairperson wrote that the idea is "really good. I wish somebody had thought of it when I was young." One chairperson, however, felt the course would be "poor because it can contain too much of a smattering of this and that with no in-depth study." Two students commented laconically: "Beautiful," and "Great idea."

Figure 7

A Comparison of College English Chairpersons, Academic Deans, and College English Majors (Students) Concerning Whether an Interdisciplinary Course Would be an Effective Way to Integrate Electives

	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>	<u>Group 3</u>
<u>Agree</u>	(18) 56%	(16) 53%	(33) 85%
<u>Impartial</u>	(6) 19%	(11) 37%	(5) 13%
<u>Disagree</u>	(6) 19%	(3) 10%	(1) 3%
<u>No Response</u>	(2) 6%		





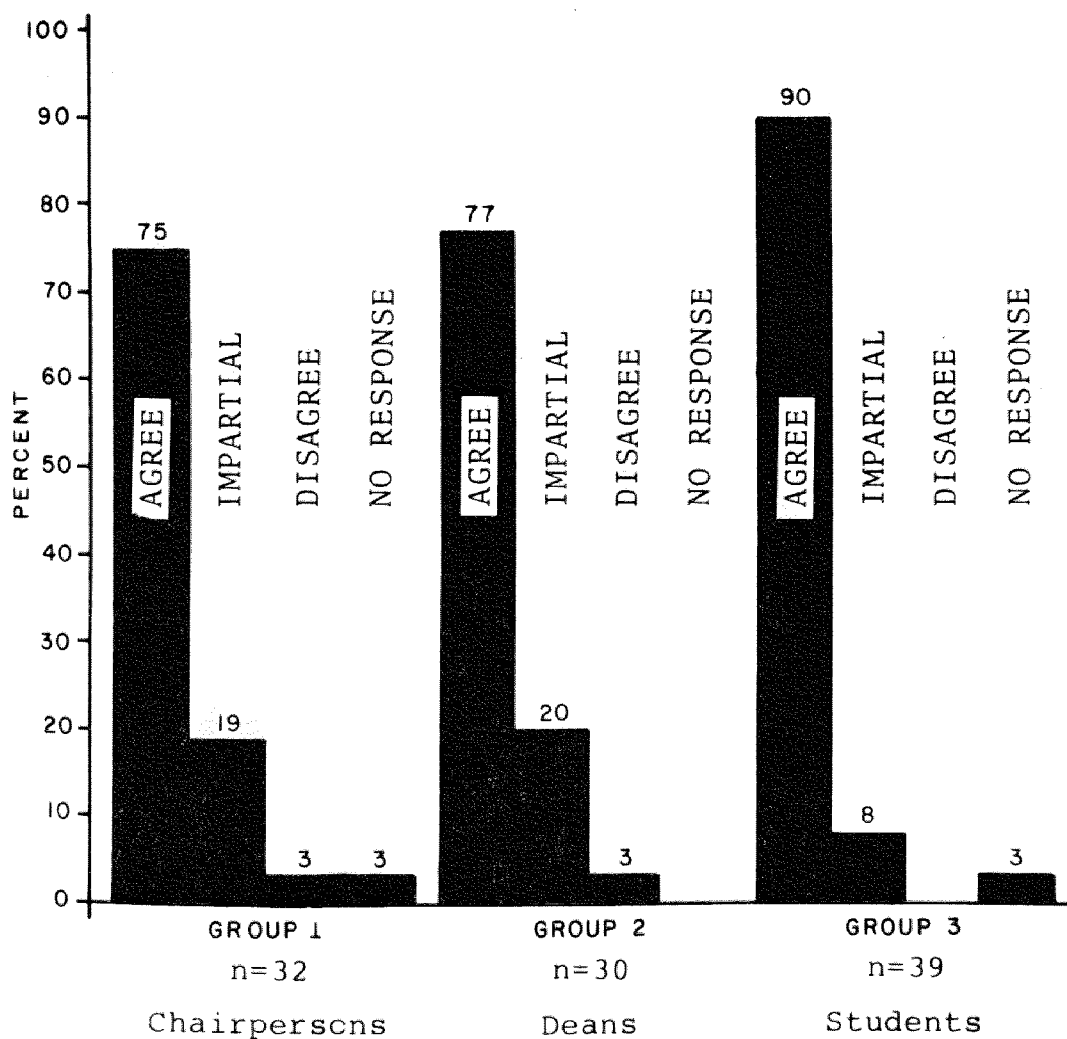
Within each group there is a substantial majority who feel that the substance of English should go beyond typical departmental limits.

Fourteen respondents added comments. Ten responders felt uncertain about the meaning of "the substance of English" and "typical department limits." Yet, one chairperson clearly feels that "no matter how hard some people try to prevent it" the subject matter does go beyond department limits. A student enumerated examples including "history, psychology and sociology."

Figure 8

A Comparison of College English Chairpersons, Academic Deans, and College English Majors (Students) Concerning Whether the Substance of English should go Beyond Typical Departmental Limits

	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>	<u>Group 3</u>
<u>Agree</u>	(24) 75%	(23) 77%	(35) 90%
<u>Impartial</u>	(6) 19%	(6) 20%	(3) 8%
<u>Disagree</u>	(1) 3%	(1) 3%	
<u>No Response</u>	(1) 3%		(1) 3%



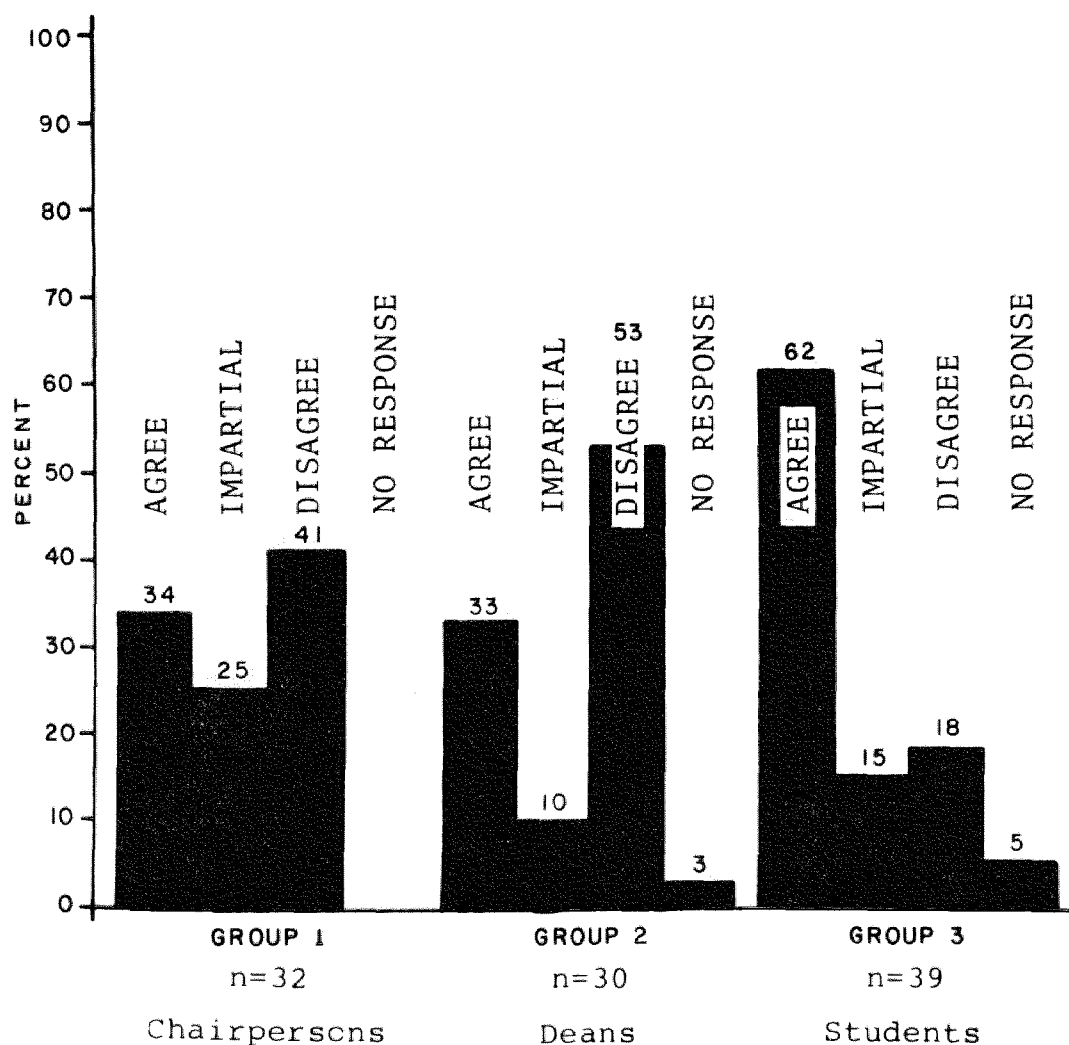
There is widely mixed reaction concerning whether an effective required freshmen English class should have much interdisciplinary content. Approximately one-third of both chairpersons and administrators agree but nearly two-thirds of the students agree. A majority of the administrators disagree with the idea.

Most of the six persons who commented about the idea stated their conviction that freshmen English students should concentrate upon composition, which they seemingly view as not being interdisciplinary. One chairperson, however, noted that interdisciplinarity "automatically happens if students write about what they are about and if papers are shared [sic]."

Figure 9

A Comparison of College English Chairpersons, Academic Deans, and College English Majors (Students) Concerning Whether an Effective Freshman Required English Class should have much Interdisciplinary Content

	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>	<u>Group 3</u>
<u>Agree</u>	(11) 34%	(10) 33%	(24) 62%
<u>Impartial</u>	(8) 25%	(3) 10%	(6) 15%
<u>Disagree</u>	(13) 41%	(16) 53%	(7) 18%
<u>No Response</u>		(1) 3%	(2) 5%



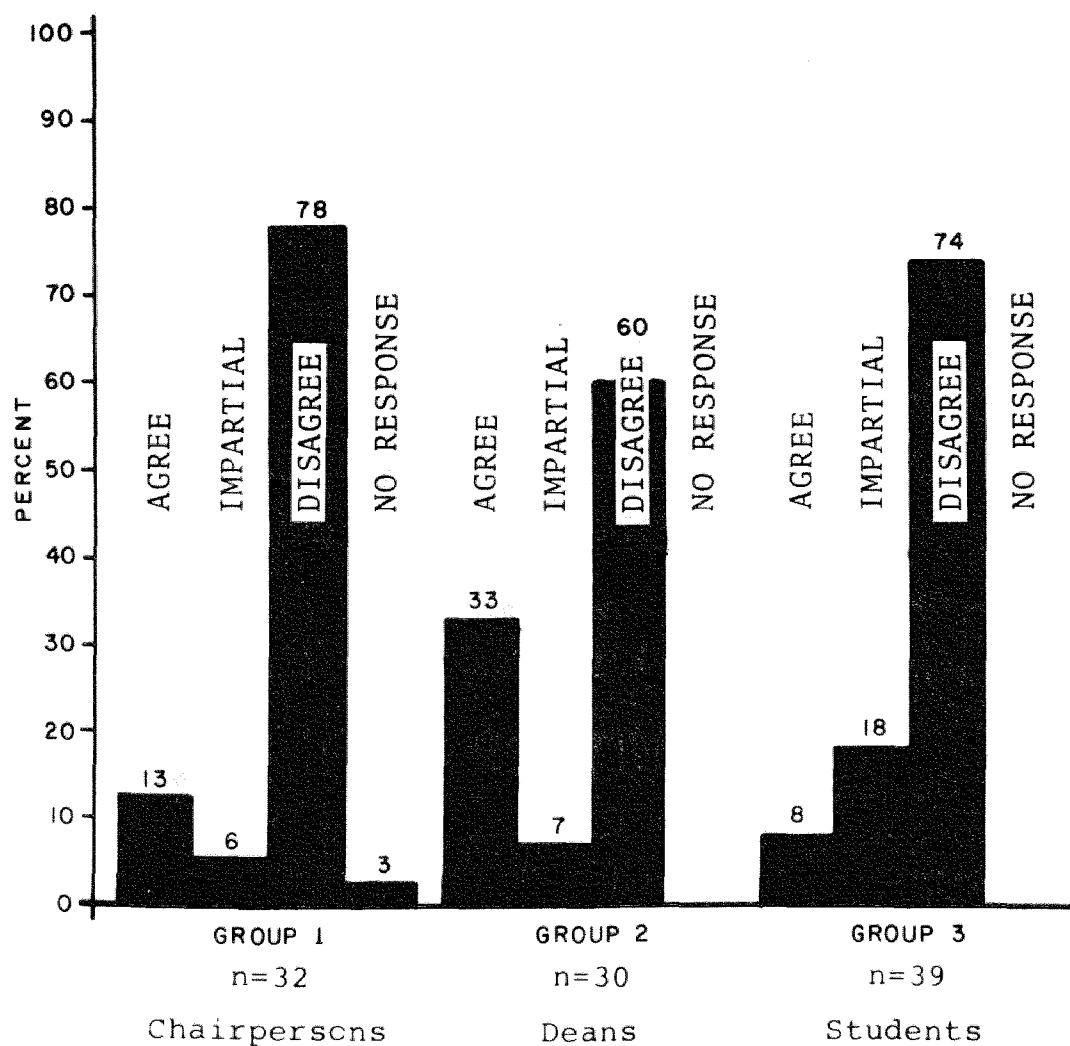
All three groups reject the idea that freshmen English classes could spend about half of the time in large groups (50 or more) as in small groups (15-20). One-third of the administrators, however, agree with the idea. Approximately three-fourths of the chairpersons and students reject the idea.

Most of the eighteen persons who commented about the idea focused upon the importance of composition at the freshman level, and, consequently, feel the smaller class is essential. One chairperson added that the class must be small because "people must write and read one another's stuff." One chairperson agrees with the theory of spending time in large groups but adds that "our experience has proved otherwise." One administrator believes that students can use their time effectively in large college English classes "as long as objectives are clear for size of group." The student attitude is reflected in the following comment: "I would strongly support...small group work. Large group instruction and discussion seldom reaches the students where they are."

Figure 10

A Comparison of College English Chairpersons, Academic Deans,  
and College English Majors (Students) Concerning Whether  
about Half of the Time in Freshman English Classes  
could be Spent as Effectively in Large Groups  
(50 or more) as in Small Groups (15-20)

	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>	<u>Group 3</u>
<u>Agree</u>	(4) 13%	(10) 33%	(3) 8%
<u>Impartial</u>	(2) 6%	(2) 7%	(7) 18%
<u>Disagree</u>	(25) 78%	(18) 60%	(29) 74%
<u>No Response</u>	(1) 3%		



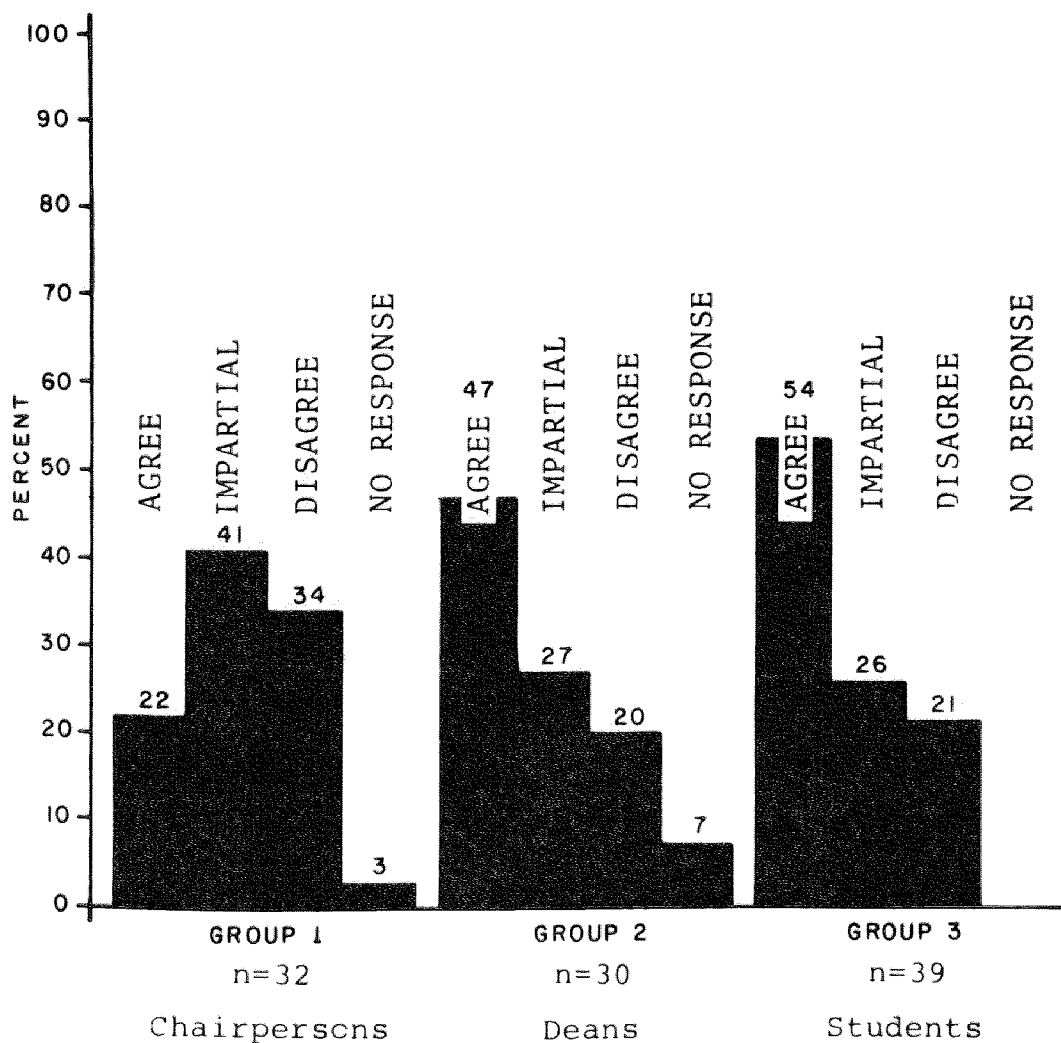
Among the three groups there is a high level of impartiality concerning whether more interest could be generated in required freshmen English if the class were organized thematically. The only group in which a majority of the respondents agree is the student group. Approximately one-third of all respondents feel impartial or neutral about the idea.

The comments which ten persons added frequently illustrate their ambivalence about thematic organization. One chairperson said that "I don't feel qualified to answer." Another added that "one of the greatest values in a regular freshmen course is the diversity in subject matter." An administrator added that the thematic approach "is the precise theory behind our present English requirement. Do not be oversanguine about the results." Student concern was made clear by one student who noted that the thematic approach could reduce the "focus on writing and speaking."

Figure 11

A Comparison of College English Chairpersons, Academic Deans, and College English Majors (Students) Concerning Whether more Interest could be Generated in Required Freshman English if the Class were Organized on the Basis of Theme

	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>	<u>Group 3</u>
<u>Agree</u>	(7) 22%	(14) 47%	(21) 54%
<u>Impartial</u>	(13) 41%	(8) 27%	(10) 26%
<u>Disagree</u>	(11) 34%	(6) 20%	(8) 21%
<u>No Response</u>	(1) 3%	(2) 7%	





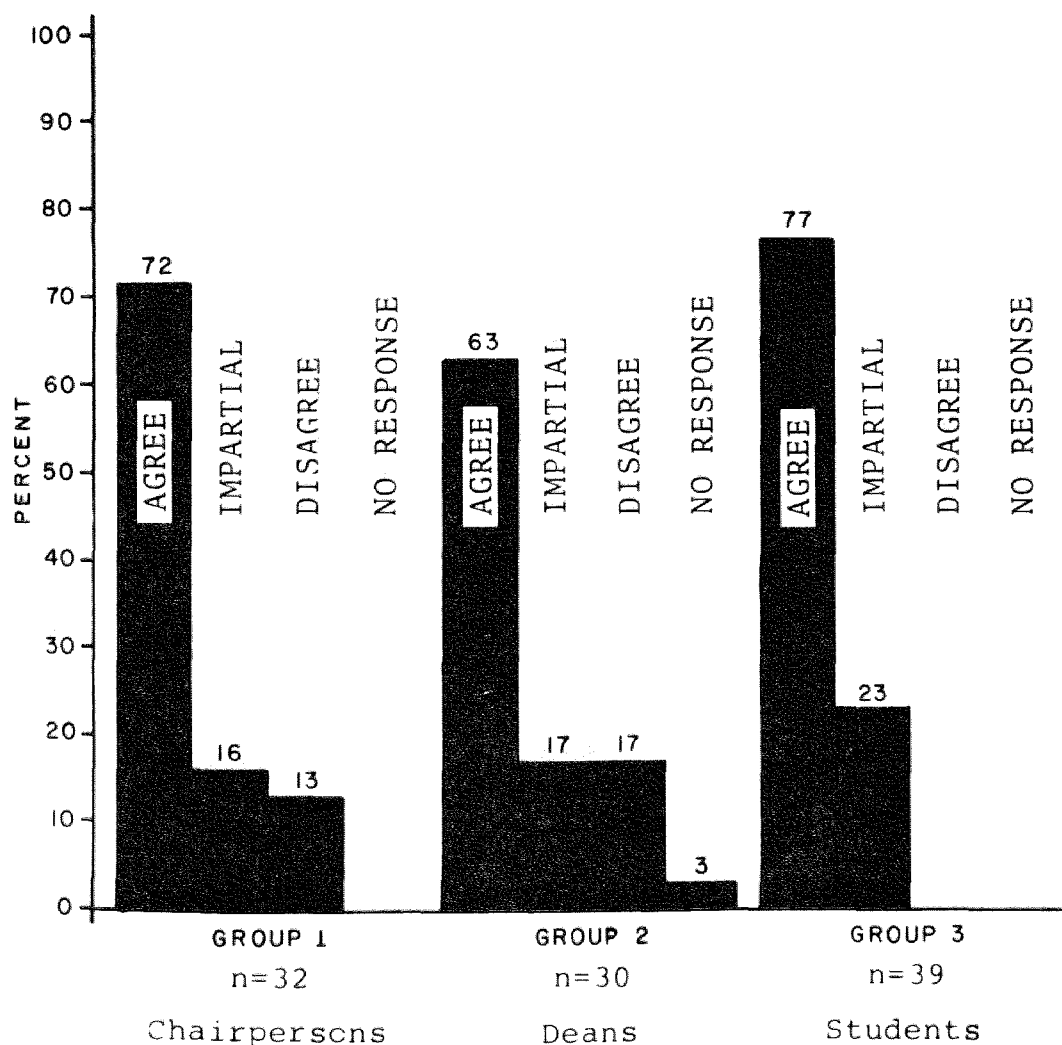
There is fairly consistent agreement among the three groups concerning the idea that interdisciplinary classes should have more than a single teacher. Approximately two-thirds of the administrators agreed with the idea while approximately three-fourths of the other groups agree.

Some of the twelve respondents who added comments noted that a single teacher could be more interdisciplinary in knowledge and method than a team of teachers. One chairperson commented that if a team approach is used that there must be "joint planning" and that "objectives and aims" must be "worked on cooperatively." Furthermore, the chairperson continues, "class attendance by all teachers should be mandatory." A student from the University of Northern Iowa who apparently had a meaningful interdisciplinary class added, "I've taken a UNI interdisciplinary course...and it was excellent because of the expertise of each individual member; yet, the cohesion offered by their team effort in which each drew relationship to the other's area and work [sic]."

Figure 12

A Comparison of College English Chairpersons, Academic Deans, and College English Majors (Students) Concerning Whether Interdisciplinary Classes should have more than a Single Teacher

	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>	<u>Group 3</u>
<u>Agree</u>	(23) 72%	(19) 63%	(30) 77%
<u>Impartial</u>	(5) 16%	(5) 17%	(9) 23%
<u>Disagree</u>	(4) 13%	(5) 17%	
<u>No Response</u>		(1) 3%	



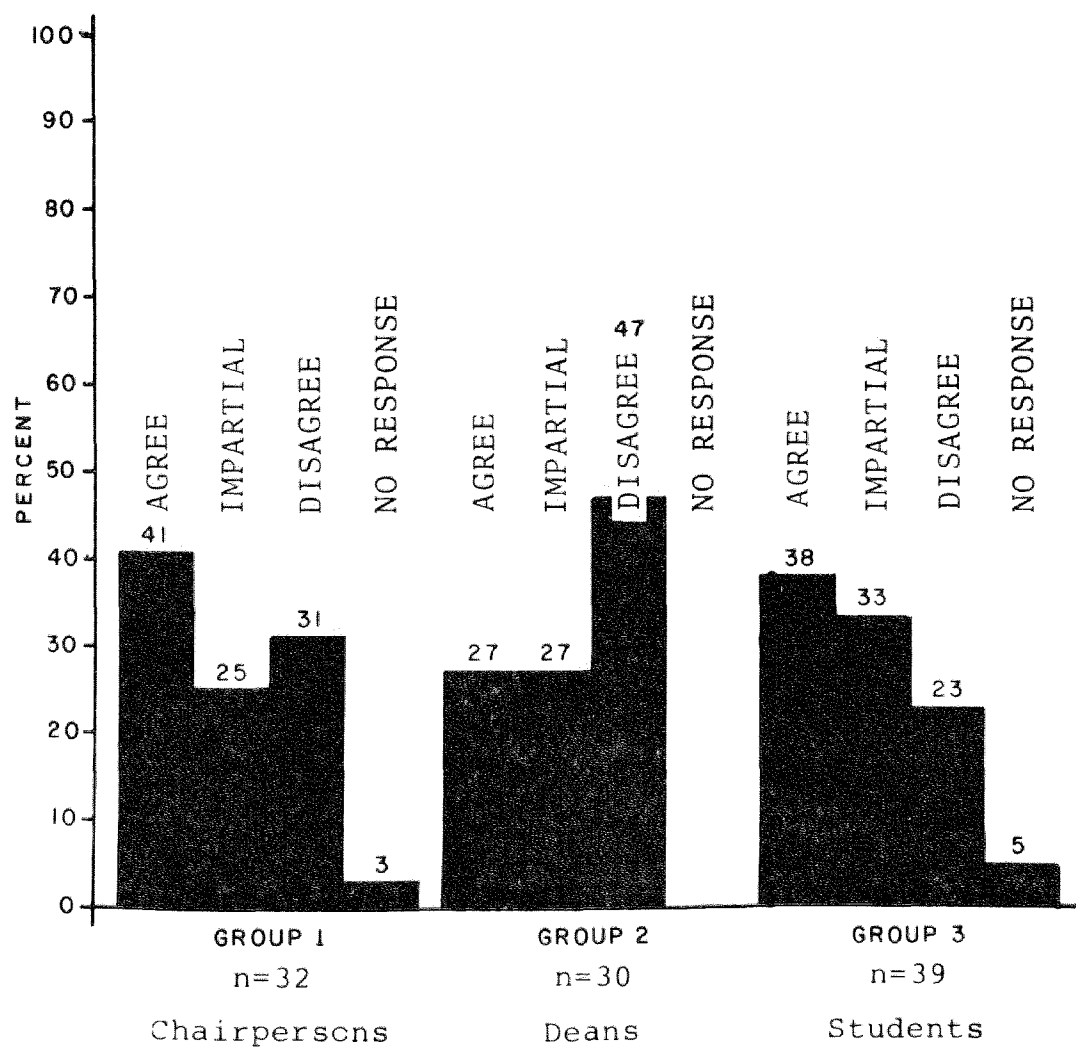
Among the three groups there is a wide mix of responses to the idea that interdisciplinary classes should be elective rather than required. In no group does a majority viewpoint emerge in any of the four response categories.

The ambivalence is noted in some of the fourteen persons who added comments including a chairperson who would like to see interdisciplinary courses "both required and elective." Another adds that "I'm not happy about any required course--even though I teach a whole program--full of required courses." A third chairperson would like to "see a required art-music-lit course--but in addition to, not instead of basic courses in e.g., comp and lit [sic]." One administrator may have best summarized a general attitude by adding that interdisciplinary courses should not be elective any "more than any class." A student added the idea that elective classes "are always met with more enthusiasm than are required courses."

Figure 13

A Comparison of College English Chairpersons, Academic Deans, and College English Majors (Students) Concerning Whether Interdisciplinary Classes should be Elective Rather than Required

	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>	<u>Group 3</u>
<u>Agree</u>	(13) 41%	(8) 27%	(15) 38%
<u>Impartial</u>	(8) 25%	(8) 27%	(13) 33%
<u>Disagree</u>	(10) 31%	(14) 47%	(9) 23%
No Response	(1) 3%		(2) 5%



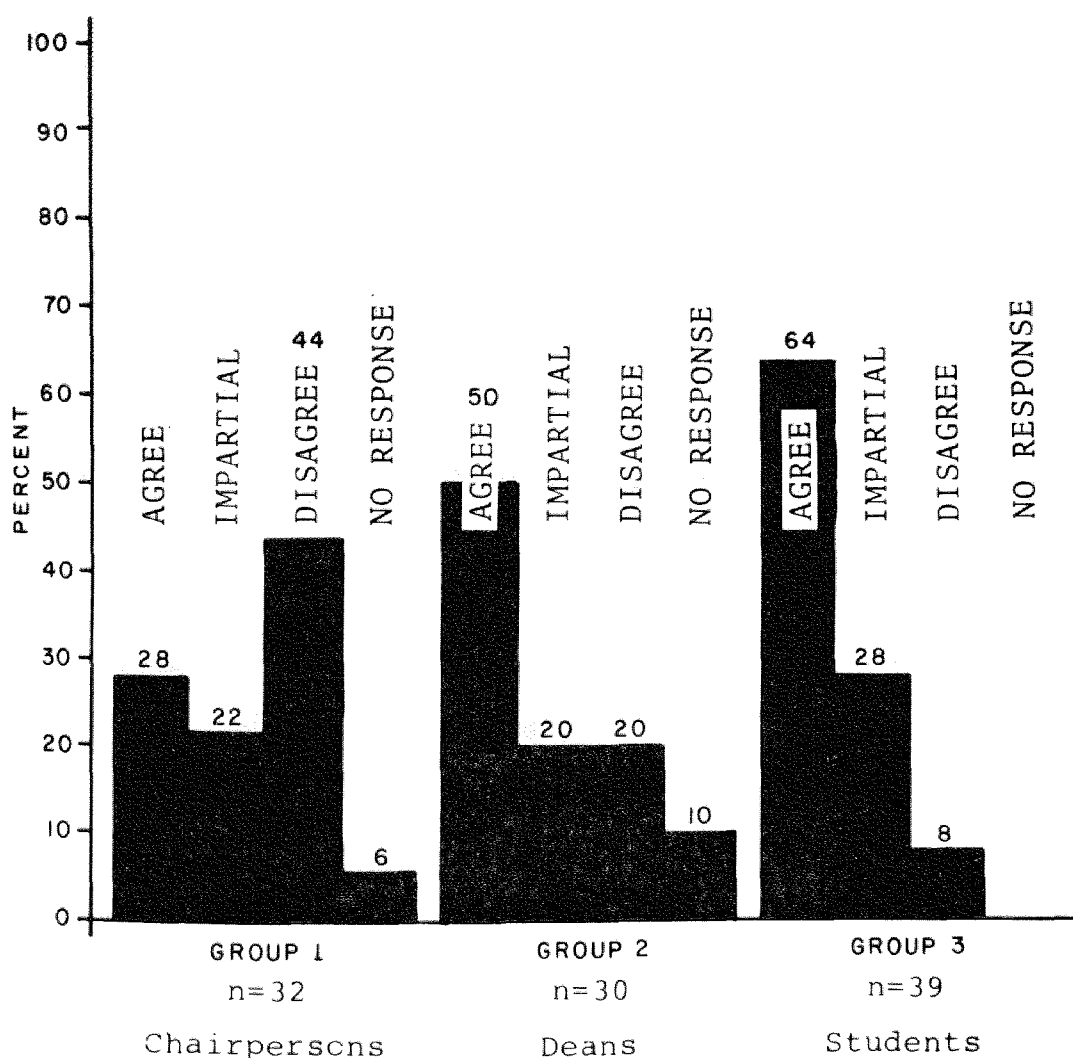
There is a substantial difference among the respondents concerning whether college English courses are too compartmentalized or too unrelated to other courses. Nearly one-half of the chairpersons disagree with the idea. On the other hand, one-fifth of the administrators disagree while one-half of them agree. Nearly two-thirds of the students agree with the idea.

Of the fifteen who added comments, one chairperson noted that students are advised "especially in history and fine arts" to take courses "that have a relationship." Another chairperson feels that "too many teachers in other areas are unrelated to us, i.e., don't (won't) correct errors in writing because they are too weak (as writers) themselves." An administrator feels the "skill building area" English courses are too compartmentalized. A student added, "I agree very much. College English classes are a BORE."

Figure 14

A Comparison of College English Chairpersons, Academic Deans, and College English Majors (Students) Concerning Whether College English Courses are too Compartmentalized or are too Unrelated to Other Courses

	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>	<u>Group 3</u>
<u>Agree</u>	(9) 28%	(15) 50%	(25) 64%
<u>Impartial</u>	(7) 22%	(6) 20%	(11) 28%
<u>Disagree</u>	(14) 44%	(6) 20%	(3) 8%
<u>No Response</u>	(2) 6%	(3) 10%	



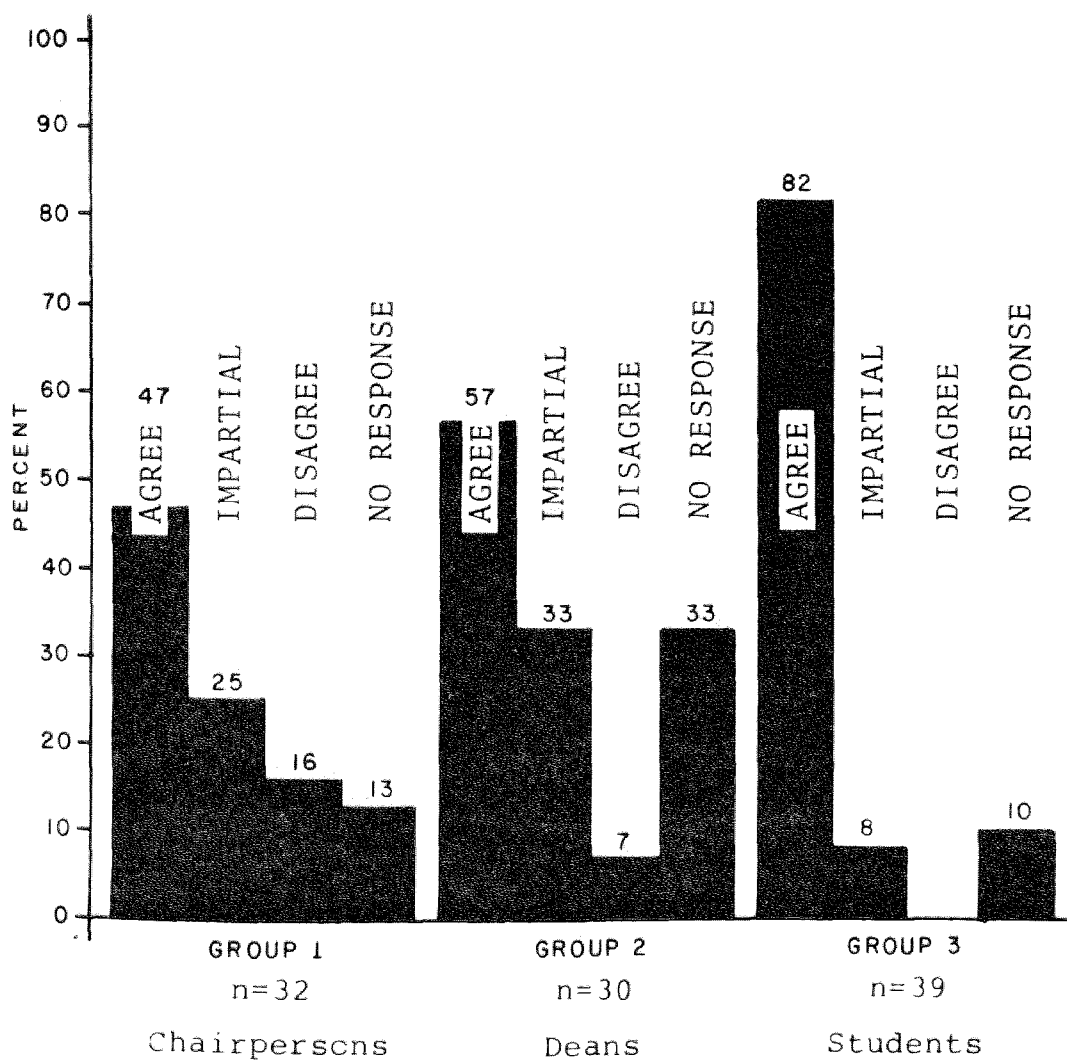
The idea that college English classes can be improved by using outside resource persons is more appealing to the students than to the chairpersons or the administrators. Slightly under one-half of the chairpersons agree with the idea while slightly over one-half of the administrators agree. A substantial majority of the students, on the other hand, agree with the notion.

Of the seven who added responses, a chairperson, who strongly agreed with the idea, commented that outside persons in specific careers convince students of the "necessity for effective communication." Another chairperson added the idea is excellent but I "keep doing nothing about it." Yet, a note of hesitancy emerged as two chairpersons added that "occasionally" outside resource people could be used effectively.

Figure 15

A Comparison of College English Chairpersons, Academic Deans, and College English Majors (Students) Concerning Whether College English Classes could be Improved by Using Outside Resource Persons from other Classes or from the Community

	<u>Group 1</u>	<u>Group 2</u>	<u>Group 3</u>
<u>Agree</u>	(15) 47%	(17) 57%	(32) 82%
<u>Impartial</u>	(8) 25%	(10) 33%	(3) 8%
<u>Disagree</u>	(5) 16%	(2) 7%	
<u>No Response</u>	(4) 13%	(1) 33%	(4) 10%





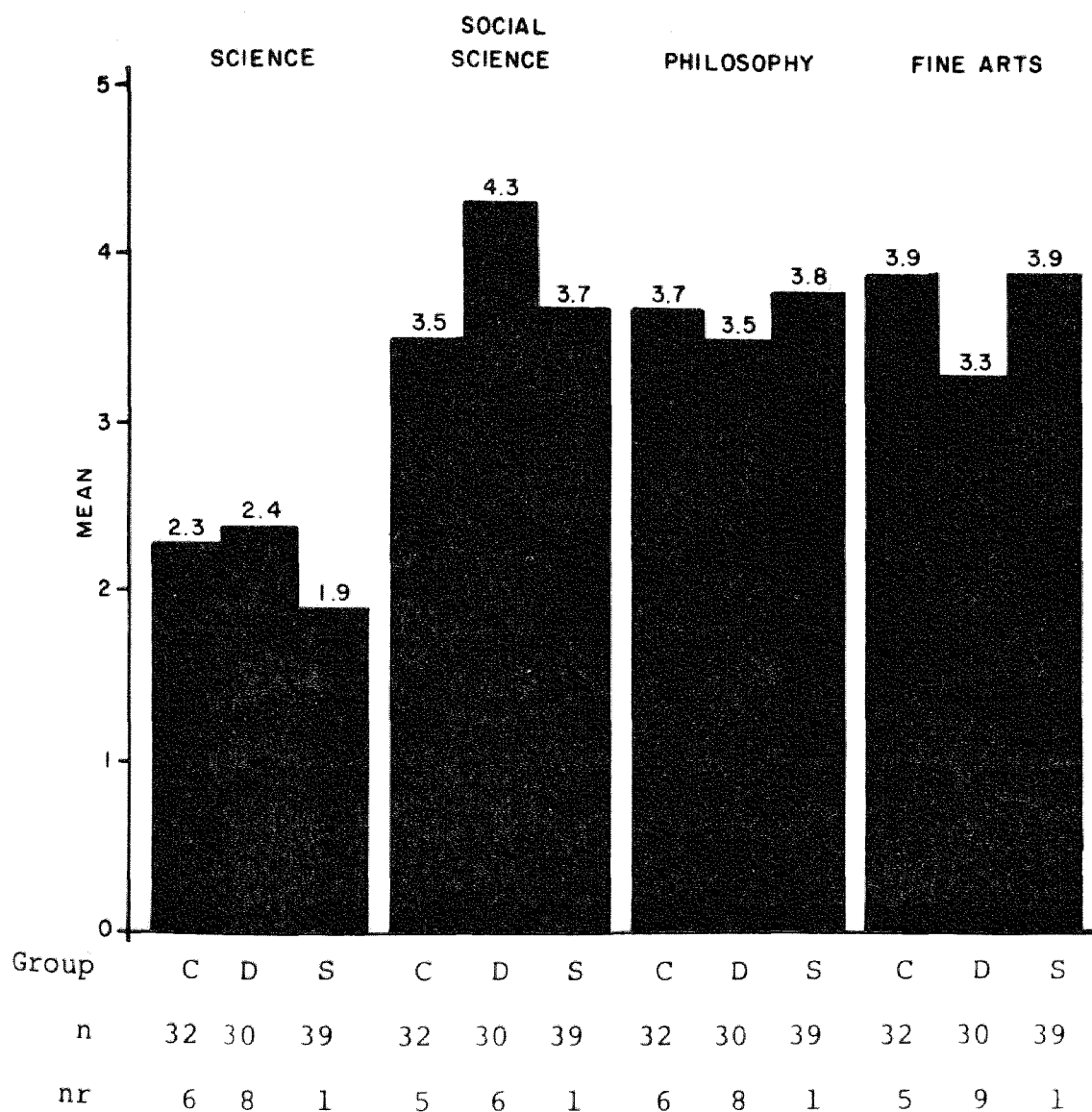
Among the three groups, there is consistent approval of the social science, philosophy and fine arts departments as the best possibilities to cooperate with English departments in planning interdisciplinary programs. The chairpersons and students agree that the best possibility for cooperation is with the fine arts department. The administrator group selected the social science department as the best possibility. Science which rated a distant fourth with all three groups is substantially rejected by the student group.

The English chairpersons agreed that only science is substantially less likely than the other choices. Quite substantially, the administrators selected the social sciences over the other choices. The students rank the fine arts, philosophy and the social sciences at nearly the same level.

Though most persons responding to the survey chose not to write in possibilities other than the four listed choices, six English chairpersons added history (mentioned twice), business (twice) and communications (twice) as possible choices. Two administrators suggested psychology and math. The students listed communication and media, physical education and math (three times each) and speech and education (twice each).

Figure 16

A Ranking by Mean of College English Chairpersons, Academic Deans, and College English Majors (Students) Concerning Which Department would most Effectively Correlate with the English Department in an Interdisciplinary Class



## Key

C = Chairpersons  
 D = Academic Deans  
 S = Students  
 n = number in group  
 nr = not responding

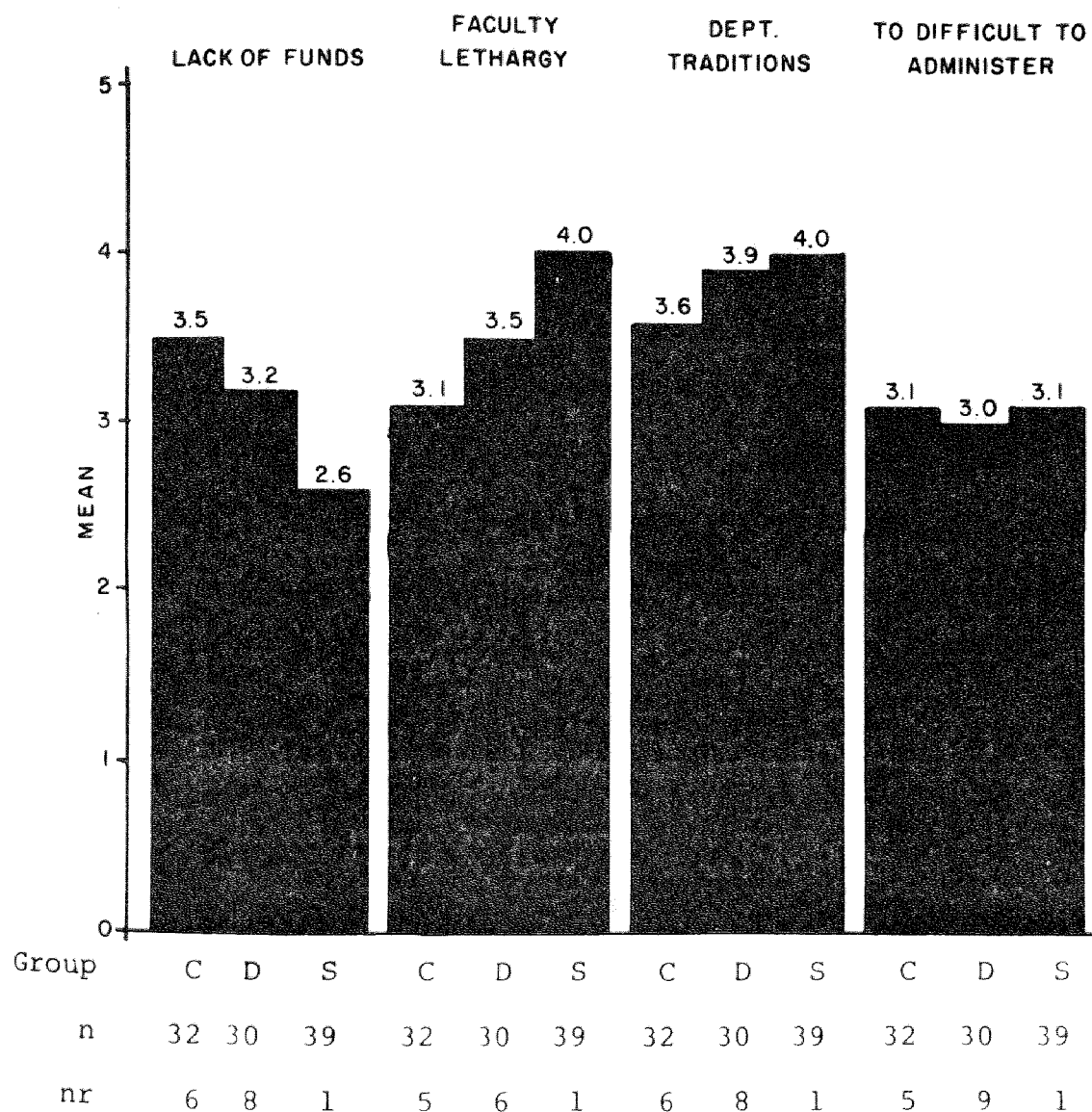
All three groups feel that the most serious impediment for English departments in the development of interdisciplinary programs is department traditions. The students also equally feel that faculty lethargy would impede the development of interdisciplinary programs. The English chairpersons rated the lack of funds as the second most important reason for not developing interdisciplinary programs; the administrators ranked it third; the students ranked it a distant fourth.

English chairpersons ranked faculty lethargy and the difficulty of administering programs as substantially less troublesome than the lack of funds and the difficulty of overcoming department traditions. The administrators ranked the lack of funds and the difficulty of administering the program as substantially less of a problem than the problems of overcoming department tradition and faculty lethargy.

The chairpersons feel that the most serious problem in addition to the four problems listed in the survey is the lack of time to develop programs (mentioned four times). Only two administrators added the problems of faculty preparation and coordination with other departments. Three students mentioned the possible lack of student interest. Two students suggested the possibility that the courses might be too easy.

Figure 17

A Ranking by Mean of College English Chairpersons, Academic Deans, and College English Majors (Students) Concerning the Conditions which would make most Difficult the Development of Interdisciplinary Classes within the English Department



## Key

C = Chairpersons  
 D = Academic Deans  
 S = Students  
 n = number in group  
 nr = not responding

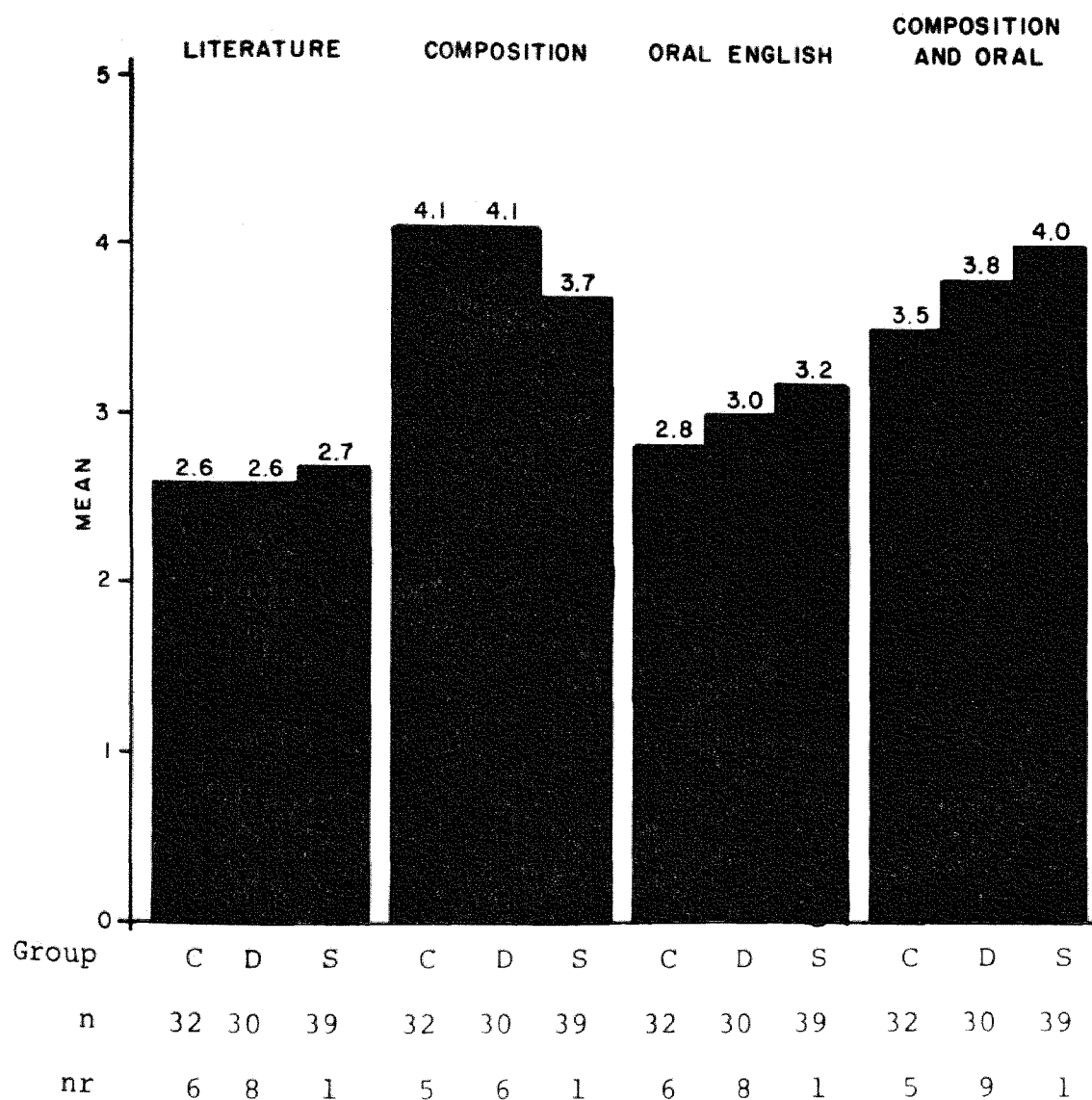
The chairperson and administrator groups both ranked composition as the most important discipline in freshman English. The student group ranked composition second to the broader choice of composition and oral combined. All three groups ranked composition or composition and oral English ahead of speech which all groups ranked third.

The least important discipline in freshman English in the view of the respondents, substantially so, is literature.

Comments added as alternative possibilities by the English chairpersons include thinking and study skills (mentioned twice), communication, grammar, linguistics and logic (each mentioned once). The administrators added speech (twice) and language development (once). The student group named grammar five times and both listening skills and reading skills (once each).

Figure 18

A Ranking by Mean of College English Chairpersons, Academic Deans, and College English Majors (Students) Concerning the Most Important Discipline in Freshman English



## Key

C = Chairpersons

D = Academic Deans

S = Students

n = number in group

nr = not responding

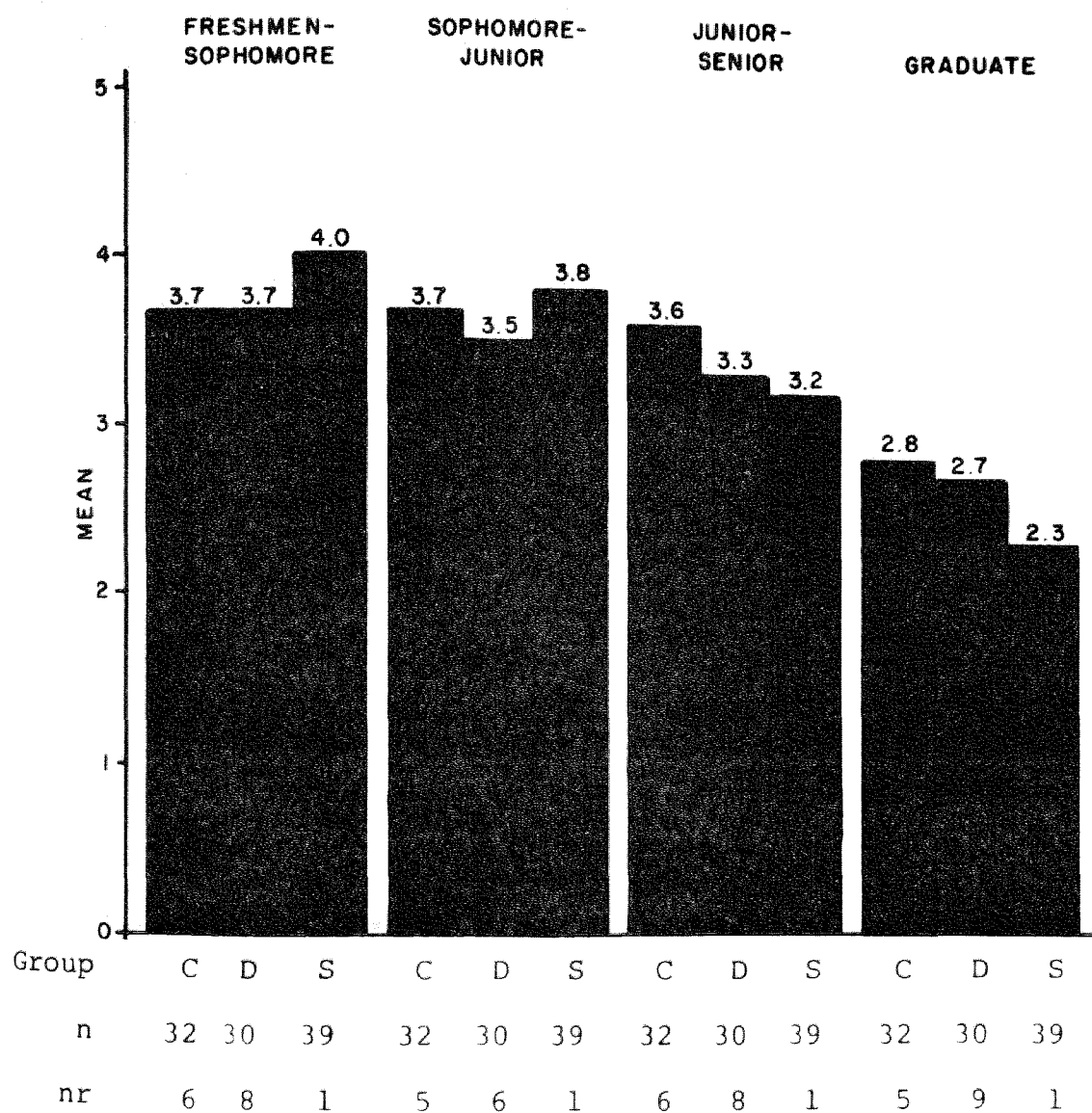
All three groups ranked in the same order the four possibilities concerning which college level would most profit from an interdisciplinary approach in English classes: the freshman-sophomore level was ranked first; the sophomore-junior level was ranked second; the junior-senior level was ranked third; the graduate level ranked last.

The most substantial difference among the three groups is noted in the student group which strongly feels that interdisciplinary possibilities for English classes should be explored during the first two years.

Few comments were added by respondents since the range of possible combinations was fairly complete in the listed options. One chairperson and one administrator, however, added the potential of exploring interdisciplinary possibilities among vocational students. One student suggested interdisciplinary programs in continuing education programs.

Figure 19

A Ranking by Mean of College English Chairpersons, Academic Deans, and College English Majors (Students) Concerning the Educational Level which would most Profit from an Interdisciplinary Approach in English



## Key

C = Chairpersons

D = Academic Deans

S = Students

n = number in group

nr = not responding



### Implications of the Survey

The responses made to the survey statements clearly illustrate the potential which interdisciplinarity has in developing undergraduate English programs. The attitudes expressed by the three groups, at times, are so widely divergent that no sharply-focused reaction emerges. The survey was designed to measure attitudes of the respondents concerning the philosophical implications underlying college English programs. Other statements on the survey elicit attitudes about how English should be structured. Other items are concerned with the administration of programs. The final category deals with the departments which English departments might best relate to.

The respondents are essentially unified in feeling that the underlying philosophy of college English departments should be as follows:

1. It should be more responsive for preparing students to cope with the real world.
2. It should encourage English faculty members to develop interdisciplinary courses.
3. It should allow the substance of English to cross departmental lines.

An interdisciplinary humanities course could be developed which speaks to the three widely approved ideas.

The survey respondents do not support uniformly the following ideas:

1. Required freshman English, an anachronism in some institutions, should have much interdisciplinary content.
2. Interdisciplinary courses should be elective. An inverse interpretation of the responses (see fig. 13) suggests that neither do the respondents believe they should be required.
3. Outside resource persons would conclusively improve English classes.

Concerning the structure of college English, the respondents are unified in believing the following:

1. English curriculum should be planned from a broad concept rather than a narrow one.
2. Interdisciplinary courses, even though developed primarily by the English department, should be partly staffed by persons from other departments.
3. The large-group small-group format is inappropriate at the fifty percent level.
4. Interdisciplinary classes should have more than one teacher.

Concerning structure, the respondents feel:

1. Freshman English should not necessarily be organized on the basis of theme.
2. Interdisciplinary classes could be either elective or required.

The respondents by majority support the administrative idea that an interdisciplinary course could be an effective way to integrate electives. They see, however, English department tradition standing in the way of developing interdisciplinary courses. Finally, the respondents agree that

from an administrative viewpoint the most likely place to develop interdisciplinary English programs is at the freshman-sophomore level.

The survey points to the

1. importance of composition, especially during the freshman year.
2. need for a wide variety of sources and experiences in improving composition.
3. social sciences, philosophy and fine arts departments as the best choices in working with the English department in developing interdisciplinary courses.

The five institutions discussed in this chapter illustrate the potential of interdisciplinary humanities programs. There is strong commitment of English teachers and departments to the programs. The institutions examined in this chapter echo the wide diversity of colleges and universities examined in Chapter II. Clearly, interdisciplinarity can be successful in any institution which is willing to make an intelligent commitment to the idea. The survey, also, points to a widespread belief that an interdisciplinary humanities course can be a meaningful experience for students during their first two years in college.

## CHAPTER IV

### CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EXEMPLARY INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAM

Both the literature which describes interdisciplinary programs and the study of the Iowa programs point to the need for institutional planning in developing interdisciplinary courses. If courses are interdepartmental as well as interdisciplinary, the planning may become extremely complex. Also, every person interviewed in the Iowa study in Chapter III spoke of the greater personal commitment needed by teachers who plan and teach interdisciplinary courses. This chapter will answer questions vital to an understanding of interdisciplinarity. Also, the most significant characteristics of a model interdisciplinary humanities program will be presented.

The success of interdisciplinarity appears to be rooted in openness and commitment. This factor makes the following questions important:

1. What disciplines can be successfully integrated?

The survey of Iowa institutions reveals that English departments may develop interdisciplinary programs from many different disciplines.

There is no universal support to indicate that freshman English should be replaced by interdisciplinary courses. Freshmen who elect to take interdisciplinary humanities courses, however, should have the opportunity. Beyond the freshman year, there appears to be no end to the possibilities. English majors, the survey reveals, are receptive to the fine arts, but psychology and film appear in many interdisciplinary classes along with one or more specific disciplines from the English department. Institutional focus could make the sciences the best possible choices despite the general lack of appeal among department chairpersons and English majors.

2. What class levels are the most appropriate levels for interdisciplinary classes?

The freshman and sophomore years appear to be the best choices for developing interdisciplinary courses. Institutions which are concerned about the lack of a core experience should consider developing interdisciplinary courses for freshmen and sophomores.

3. What kind of institution can most profit from interdisciplinary courses?

Frequently small institutions have established required programs to create a cohesive student

atmosphere and to help students understand the interdisciplinary nature of the liberal arts. The very small colleges, those with fewer than 500 students, may very well be able to attract and hold a superior faculty by offering an interdisciplinary course which uses the services of teachers whose disciplines are too restrictive to warrant the teacher's full time service. However, the study finds that interdisciplinarity works primarily because of teacher and institution commitment rather than because of size or mission of the institution.

4. How expensive are interdisciplinary courses?

Most programs in Iowa, serving 100-200 students, are operating for approximately \$2,000 over the expenses incurred in traditional classes.

Program directors feel that more money should be spent for the programs. Transdisciplinary programs such as the Miami-Dade and the Lehigh programs require a very high original outlay to plan and to execute.

5. Should interdisciplinary courses be elective or required?

The study fails to substantiate a point of view concerning this question.

The disciplines usually associated with English departments have created the very existence and perpetuation of the other disciplines. The sciences, physical and social, exist because they are written and read. The creativity and magnificence of the fine arts, too, are perpetuated by all of the rhetorical modes of discourse. English departments, in short, offer the potential and promise of being at the center of interdisciplinary programs.

Characteristics of a Model Interdisciplinary  
Humanities Class

1. The curriculum should be planned from a broad conceptual base rather than a narrow one.
2. More than a single medium of expression should be emphasized.
3. The course should emphasize self-expression through oral and written discourse.
4. The literature used should be chosen because it is conducive to the theme or the question. It should not be restricted by time, genre, or nationality.
5. Students should be consulted in planning courses.
6. The course should attempt to integrate with existing campus programs, such as plays or speeches. The planners of interdisciplinary courses should have a voice in the planning of cultural affairs programs which are available to the general college population.

7. At least one discipline from a department other than the English department should be included in an interdisciplinary course. This statement does not imply that equal time or emphasis is desirable.
8. The course may be taught by a team of teachers representing their disciplines or by a single teacher who teaches material which is interdisciplinary. The initial planning should be carried out by persons from different disciplines.
9. The course should be cross-listed or have the potential of being expanded by individual projects to offer credit options.
10. The course should emphasize inquiry which focuses upon questions or themes.
11. Class size should be restricted to small groups of no more than twenty-five students.
12. The humanistic method (Noll's definition, p. 4) should be emphasized. The method relies upon subjective response values, personal experience, and tends to pursue goals beyond fact.
13. Course content should vary in on-going courses or required courses enough to avoid staleness. The inclusion of a literary work not previously read by the teacher is a technique which some interdisciplinary teachers use.



14. The course should have a major creative project which asks students to synthesize elements of the course.
15. The course should explicitly emphasize human values.

The model interdisciplinary humanities course should be corporately planned; it should also be corporately evaluated. Constant reevaluation by students and faculty members of the component parts, as well as the whole course, is essential for a successful course. Weekly or bi-monthly meetings of faculty members can serve as a conduit through which ideas can flow.

The characteristics of a model interdisciplinary humanities class clearly point to an English curriculum with emphasis upon experimentation, integration of knowledge, inquiry, humanistic methods, and human values. Teachers who are inclined toward these characteristics might well find an interdisciplinary humanities class to be an ideal setting to achieve worthy ends.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Interdisciplinarity offers college and university English departments the possibility of moving away from compartmentalization and fragmentation, characteristics which work against unity in the humanities. An interdisciplinary humanities course offers the possibility for improving collegiality, for working more directly with students, for developing a more integrated understanding of ideas, and for involving students more in the processes of planning and learning.

The most significant factor in the successful development of an interdisciplinary humanities course is commitment. Institutions of all sizes have noteworthy interdisciplinary humanities courses. Large state universities, such as the University of Iowa and the University of Southern California, have successful programs; Coe College, in Iowa, and Morehouse College in Georgia, two small, private colleges with widely different student bodies have developed programs; large metropolitan junior colleges, such as Miami-Dade Community College, and small private junior colleges, such as Ottumwa Heights College, in Iowa, have successful programs. The size and mission of the institution are far less important

than is the commitment of the institution.

The kind and motive of existing interdisciplinary humanities programs is broad. The USC program is designed for "highly motivated students." The Iowa program, on the other hand, attempts to appeal to students from a wide range of academic aptitudes. The Morehouse College program is designed to focus upon students who need to "acquire minimal tools," with emphasis upon composition, for success in college; the Coe program focuses upon literature. The Miami-Dade focus is upon the process of "self-actualizing," while the Ottumwa Heights program emphasizes literature and the fine arts. The wide range of programs suggests almost endless possibilities of combinations which could be developed in interdisciplinary humanities courses.

The implementation of an interdisciplinary humanities program in a very small college might be a practical solution for the institution in the utilization of faculty. Some disciplines in a small college might be unable to generate enough enrollment to warrant a full-time teacher. An interdisciplinary humanities program could allow teachers with strong discipline backgrounds to teach in those disciplines and to achieve full-time status by also contributing to the humanities program. Thus, the small college would be able to have a broader, more competitive program, than it would have by using a multidisciplinary approach.

Interdisciplinary humanities courses should emphasize

student self-expression. Many excellent programs emphasize creative projects for the students. Furthermore, students should be involved in the planning and evaluation of programs.

Course material in interdisciplinary humanities programs most frequently is unrestricted by time, genre, or nationality. Most often the choice of literature depends upon its applicability to the theme or question which is often at the center of interdisciplinary humanities courses.

Ultimately, the success of an interdisciplinary humanities course or program must be rooted in institutional cooperation and commitment. Integrating the humanities classes with campus cultural affairs programs and other campus activities can provide for meaningful experiences. The cooperation with teachers from other departments can be a pleasant and enriching experience for the faculty members working in interdisciplinary humanities courses.

Finally, through a strong emphasis upon a humanistic process and human values, an interdisciplinary humanities course might hold the promise of teaching students how to cope with life better and how to appreciate life more. The possibilities are too promising to leave unexplored.

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